



EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

“It is the province of knowledge to speak. And it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.”

--Oliver Wendell Holmes

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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS LISTENING?



HOW DO YOU LISTEN?



HOW CAN YOU LISTEN BETTER?



What is Listening?

“How to Remove scratches from a DVD.”

1. Can you hear this?
2. Can you listen to the message?
3. Can you figure out the actual meaning of the message?



What is Listening?



PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE

- Hearing
- Receiving sound through the air without REAL effort

- Listening
- Making sense of what is heard
- Actual meaning oriented



Listening conceptualization is culture-driven!



In the U.S. multiple studies have been conducted with different populations on how much time is spent on listening and communicating. It is thought that almost 2/3 of our time is spent listening!



SO.....



Listening is hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding (Brownwell, 2002)



IMPORTANT: Almost 50% of conversation is retained, but the other 50% escapes due to external and internal barriers/thoughts. This % lessens when under stress, with difficult conversations , or when feeling tense or defensive.





Small Group Exercise

Individual Assessments



Benefits of Active Listening



- Respect and Trust
- Enhances our Relationships
- Conflict Resolution
- Cultivates Positive Work Environment
- Wins Friends
- Confidence
- Reduces Negative Assumptions





Barriers to Effective Listening



Internal Barriers:



- Hearing what you want to hear
- Biased listening
- “Hot Buttons” and the Effects of Emotions on Listening
- Semantic Barriers (understanding what is said—word selection)





Barriers to Effective Listening

External Barriers

- Talker not speaking loudly enough
- Talker's mannerisms, appearance
- Loud noises
- Room temperature (too hot / too cold)
- Interruptions, phone calls
- Fidgeting / Clock watching
- Time pressure, deadline





Non-Verbal Listening Cues

- Listen with your eyes!
- Be aware of:
 - Facial expressions (face color & how it changes; movement of lips, mouth, cheeks, eyebrows)
 - Hand gestures
 - Body positioning/movements
 - Personal Space
 - Pitch, rate, subtle variations in tone of voice





Emotion Charades



Please split up into groups of 4 people

- What did you notice? General observations!
- How did it feel to be the person acting out the emotion? How did it feel to be the person guessing?



What makes a good listener?

Group Brainstorm!





The Effective Listener!

Active Listening presumes: You are important to me and I understand and accept all as true!

1. *Focus on yourself*—Are you ready to listen?
2. *Listen to yourself*—Where is your mind today?
3. *Pay attention to the environment, space, non verbal cues, and continually check in with yourself to make sure you are JUST LISTENING!*

Most of the time people need to talk through their problems, not get advice on their problems.



Essentials of Active Listening!



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1. Stop talking—You can't talk and listen at the same time!
 2. Put the person at ease—Give them space and time and permission to speak (Relax)
 3. Show the person that you want to hear them— Look at them, nod when you can agree, ask them to explain further.
 4. Remove distractions—Be willing to turn off TV, etc.
 5. Empathize with the person—look at the situation from their point of view.



Essentials of Active Listening!



6. Be patient—some people take longer to find the right word (don't interrupt)
7. Watch your own emotions (facial expressions)
8. Don't criticize, argue, or disagree
9. Restate what you hear! Paraphrase what you heard.
10. Minimal Encouragers—brief prompts— “Oh?”
11. Reflecting—Reflect speakers words in terms of feelings.



Essentials of Active Listening



12. Validation—listen openly and acknowledge persons ability to talk about a “difficult problem”



13. “I” messages—Focuses on the problem, not the person.



14. Summarizing the conversation

15. Ask open ended questions!



Finding a Balance

To be an effective listener you have to find a balance between listening, hearing, and responding with revealing your own position and providing appropriate input/feedback at the right time!

Work to be accepting and respectful of the person and their feelings and believes without invalidating or sharing your own position.





Small Group Exercise

Talk about Listening Presentation and
practice skills learned