

## **LISTENING MAKES COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE AND COMPLETE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

When people think about the communication they usually focus on the ability to send the Message. People often focus on their speaking ability believing that good speaking equals good communication. But the ability to listen well is as necessary and important component for successful communication as speaking. Listening accounts for half of the entire communication process. Listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret, count, and evaluate what they hear. Listening is a skill that needs to be developed; it does not just happen without effort. An effective listener pays attention to all the cues like voice intonation, message length, emotion, and body language, etc. The medium that we use to communicate can have an impact on the ability to listen and to have feedback. A good listener uses questions sparingly because questions tend to focus the conversation on the questioner's perspective and concerns and can derail the focus of the speaker. Good listeners are often some of the best speakers because they have taken the time to find out what people are truly interested in. The ability to listen actively can improve personal relationships by reducing conflicts, strengthening cooperation, and fostering understanding. If we understand what is important to people than we understand how to reach them.

Many of us think that communication is talking - and talk is what we do. We interrupt, advise, reassure, judge, analyze, criticize, argue, moralize, threaten, divert, diagnose, etc., etc. But, good communication requires good listening as well as talking. Since we have two ears and only one mouth, listening just might be the more important skill. However, we receive almost no training in good listening and usually do not realize that really "hearing" someone is not a passive activity. When you are speaking and someone is not paying attention, how do you feel? Annoyed, frustrated, discounted, rejected, anxious, or angry? Such feelings usually make communication more difficult. So how can we show someone who is speaking that we are paying attention to them?

**Keywords:** *communication process, conversational perspective, effective listener, fostering understanding.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts, and opinions clearly and effectively are only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us. When a person decides to communicate with another person, he/she does so to fulfill a need. The person wants something, feels discomfort, and/or has feelings or thoughts about something. In deciding to communicate, the person selects the method or code which he/she believes will effectively deliver the message to the other person. The code used to send the message can be either verbal or nonverbal. When the other

person receives the coded message, they go through the process of decoding or interpreting it into understanding and meaning. Effective communication exists between two people when the receiver interprets and understands the sender's message in the same way the sender intended it. Listening effectively is difficult because people vary in their communication skills and in how clearly they express themselves, and often has different needs, wants, and purposes for interacting. As a listener, we attend to the level that we think is most important. Failing to recognize the level most relevant and important to the speaker can lead to a kind of **crossed wires** where the two people are not on the same wavelength. The purpose of the contact and the nature of our relationship with the person will usually determine what level or levels are appropriate and important for the particular interaction.

**Active listening** is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret, count, and evaluate what they hear. The ability to listen actively can improve personal relationships by reducing conflicts, strengthening cooperation, and fostering understanding. When interacting, people often are not listening attentively. They may be distracted, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next (the latter case is particularly true in conflict situations or disagreements). Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others, focusing attention on the speaker. Suspending one's frame of reference, suspending judgment, and avoiding other internal mental activities are important to fully attend to the speaker. Active listening skills can be of varying degrees, depending on the cues of messages.

**Competitive or Combative Listening** happens when we are more interested in promoting our point of view than in understanding or exploring someone else's view. We either listen for openings to take the floor or for flaws or weak points we can attack. As we pretend to pay attention we are impatiently waiting for an opening, or internally formulating our rebuttal and planning the devastating comeback that will destroy their argument and make us the victor.

**On comparing Analytical and Deep Listening** we come across many different cognitive factors and their swings.

<b>ANALYTIC LISTENING</b>	<b>DEEP LISTENING</b>
MOOD More tense, distracted, competitive, superior	MOOD: Peaceful and curious, humble, and tentative
MIND: Busy with judgment and analysis; "If you say this, it probably means you also think that." Feeling of preoccupation.	MIND: Thoughts are dropped rather than pursued. Any analysis is ignored and discarded. The feeling is inquisitive.

MEMORY: Effort made to not forget anything, so while that is going on, the listening is distracted. Fear that something might be forgotten.	MEMORY: No effort is made to remember anything. There is a quiet assurance that the mind will provide whatever memories are needed without forcing it.
CONVERSATION: Frequent interruptions, challenges, confrontations. Sometimes both talking at the same time. "Making points" or competing for who can prove the other is mistaken. The rapid pace of speech.	CONVERSATION: Mostly questions, interruptions only when the listener is confused and unclear. No confrontations or challenges. There is a slower pace, and the feeling is that there is no hurry.
INFORMATION: is guarded and not shared openly; responses are based on whether they will achieve a goal and data are "edited" before being shared. "Be careful you don't give away an advantage."	INFORMATION: is shared openly and with trust and confidence. The listener tries to not have an agenda or a preferred way to solve the problem, so the more information on the table, the better.
PROBLEM SOLVING: Effort to force one person to accept the other's solution. Feels win-lose to both sides: "I must win or at least I must not lose. Feeling of superiority may be present, "If you would only see it my way, you would make sense."	PROBLEM SOLVING: Flashes of insight and intuition; there is a win-win attitude and solutions that would harm either party are simply rejected or ignored. Often the problem is solved uniquely or unusually as a result of this intuition-based approach to solving problems. There is often a sense of humor or pleasure when the solution appears.

**Active or Reflective Listening** is the single most useful and important listening skill. Inactive listening we are also genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting, or what the message means, and we are active in checking out our understanding before we respond with our new message. We restate or paraphrase our understanding of their message and reflect it to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.

Usually, it is important to paraphrase and use your own words in verbalizing your understanding of the message. Parroting back the words verbatim is annoying and does not ensure an accurate understanding of the message.

Depending on the purpose of the interaction and your understanding of what is relevant, you could reflect the other persons:

- An account of the facts.
- Thoughts and beliefs.
- Feelings and emotions.
- Wants, needs, or motivation.

- Hopes and expectations.

Don't respond to just the meaning of the words, look for the feelings or intent beyond the words. The dictionary or surface meaning of the words or code used by the sender is not the message.

Inhibit your impulse to immediately answer questions. The code may be in the form of a question. Sometimes people ask questions when they want to express themselves and are not open to hearing an answer.

Know when to quit using active listening. Once you accurately understand the sender's message, it may be appropriate to respond with your message. Don't use active listening to hide and avoid revealing your position.

If you are confused and know you do not understand, either tell the person you don't understand and ask him/her to say it another way, or use your best guess. If you are incorrect, the person will realize it and will likely attempt to correct your misunderstanding.

Active listening is a very effective first response when the other person is angry, hurt, or expressing difficult feelings toward you, especially in relationships that are important to you.

Use eye contact and listening to body language. Avoid looking at your watch or other people or activities around the room. Face and lean toward the speaker and nod your head, as it is appropriate. Be careful about crossing your arms and appearing closed or critical.

Be empathic and nonjudgmental. You can be accepting and respectful of the person and their feelings and beliefs without invalidating or giving up your position, or without agreeing with the accuracy and validity of their view.

Become a more effective listener. Practice the active listening technique and make it one of your communication skills.

## **THE TECHNIQUE**

Active listening is an extension of the Golden Rule. To know how to listen to someone else, think about how you would want to be listened to.

While the ideas are largely intuitive, it might take some practice to develop (or re-develop) the skills. Here's what good listeners know — and you should, too:

1. **Face the speaker.** Sit up straight or lean forward slightly to show your attentiveness through body language.
2. **Maintain eye contact,** to the degree that you all remain comfortable.
3. **Minimize external distractions.** Turn off the TV. Put down your book or magazine, and ask the speaker and other listeners to do the same.
4. **Respond appropriately** to show that you understand. Murmur ("uh-huh" and "um-hmm") and nod. Raise your eyebrows. Say words such as "Really," "Interesting," as well as more direct prompts: "What did you do then?" and "What did she say?"
5. **Focus solely on what the speaker is saying.** Try not to think about what you are going to say next. The conversation will follow a logical flow after the speaker makes her point.
6. **Minimize internal distractions.** If your thoughts keep horning in, simply let them go and continuously re-focus your attention on the speaker, much as you would during meditation.
7. **Keep an open mind.** Wait until the speaker is finished before deciding that you disagree. Try not to make assumptions about what the speaker is thinking.

8. **Avoid letting the speaker know how you handled a similar situation.** Unless they specifically ask for advice, assume they just need to talk it out.
9. **Even if the speaker is launching a complaint against you, wait until they finish to defend yourself.** The speaker will feel as though their point had been made. They won't feel the need to repeat it, and you'll know the whole argument before you respond. Research shows that, on average, we can hear four times faster than we can talk, so we can sort ideas as they come in...and be ready for more.
10. **Engage yourself.** Ask questions for clarification, but, once again, wait until the speaker has finished. That way, you won't interrupt their train of thought. After you ask questions, paraphrase their point to make sure you didn't misunderstand. Start with: "So you're saying..." A good listener uses questions sparingly because questions tend to focus the conversation on the questioner's perspective and concerns and can derail the focus of the speaker.

### **MEDIUM TO ENHANCE LISTENING SKILLS**

The medium that you use to communicate can have an impact on the ability to listen and to have feedback. In-person conversations are the best for devising true meaning. Phone calls are also good because they allow for the real-time exchange provided that you can get a hold of the listener. Mail and e-mail are also usually effective ways to communicate. Sometimes a sender of the message does not quite know when their message will be received. Additionally, the message could never get to its destination. Regardless of the way you choose to communicate, make sure that you always do so in a tasteful, professional manner. Keep in mind that written messages also can be looked back on for review.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the end, we would sum up by stating that listening helps to improve and strengthen relationships. Sometimes a person just needs to be heard and acknowledged before the person is willing to consider an alternative or soften his /her position. It is often easier for a person to listen to and consider the other's position when that person knows the other is listening and considering his/her position. It helps people to spot the flaws in their reasoning when they hear it played back without criticism. Active listening helps in identifying areas of agreement so the areas of disagreement put in perspective are diminished rather than magnified. Reflecting what we hear each other say helps give each a chance to become aware of the different levels that are going on below the surface. This helps to bring things into the open where they can be more readily resolved. If we accurately understand the other person's view, we can be a more effective communicator.

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