



THE WAY OF THE CROSS INTERNATIONAL

ELDERS AND MINISTERS

Overview

As Elders and Ministers in the Way of the Cross Organization, we have the responsibility to prepare our minds, homes, skills and abilities through the word of God to be the future leaders of this organization and our churches. Preaching is but a portion of the ministry God has called us to. It is important for us to understand and embrace the totality of the individual ministries God has called us to. God has placed us where we are for a reason. We must fully understand our role in that ministry; begin the work God has called us to, while improving and perfecting the skills we must have to be effective leaders in our local assemblies and national organization.

Our goal at the end of these seminars is for each attendee to walk away with a full understanding of how to listen and communicate with those God has placed in our sphere of influence. We cannot lead people if we are not effective listeners and communicators.

#	Title	Focus	Scriptures of Focus\Readings
1	What does it mean to hear and listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of hearing • Definition of listening • Types of Listeners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-Listener ○ Passive listener ○ Listeners ○ Active listeners 	<p>Think about what you believe makes an effective listener. You can not communicate, if you do not know how to listen. Every spiritual leaders has master the art of listening Gods way. We must be able to remove and\or control our preconceived notions about people before we can effectively hear</p>
2	Tips to being an Active Listener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face the speaker-Eye contact • Stop Talking • Prepare to listen-Remove internal distractions • Put the speaker at ease • Remove Distractions • Empathize • Be Patient • Avoid Personal Prejudice- Keep open mind • Listen to the Tone • Listen for ideas-Not just Words • Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communications • Don't interrupt or impose solutions • Ask Questions ensure understanding • Watch non-verbal cues • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark 10:17-26 • Matthew 15:22-28 • Luke 9:57-62 • Matthew 9:1-6 • Matthew 12:22-28 • Revelation 2:7 • 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 • Job 42:1-7 • Isaiah 30:21 • Proverbs 3:5-6 • Jeremiah 29:12-13 • Psalms 37:23-25 • Luke 22:41-44 • Ephesians 6:1-4 • Colossians 3:18-21 • Ephesians 5:20-30 • Matthew 19:5-6 • Hebrews 13:17
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We join the conversation with predetermined attitude and assumptions about the other person or the subject matter to be discussed • We are so preoccupied with our own thoughts that we are unable to listen attentively. 	



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3	7 Barriers to Active Listening: Why we don't listen as well as we could	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are completing the other person's thoughts and jumping to conclusions. • We engage in selective listening. • We feel too tired, anxious, or angry to listen actively • We don't pay enough attention to body language and supersegmentals, such as intonation, rate of speech, emphasis, or tone. • We are in a hurry 	
4	Jesus was the ultimate listener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen through the ears of God (Holy Ghost) • Challenge through the word of God • Set things into perspective • Only the word can make them hear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (1) Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) - the church that had forsaken its first love (2:4). ○ (2) Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) - the church that would suffer persecution (2:10). ○ (3) Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) - the church that needed to repent (2:16). ○ (4) Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) - the church that had a false prophetess (2:20). ○ (5) Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) - the church that had fallen asleep (3:2). ○ (6) Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) - the church that had endured patiently (3:10). ○ (7) Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) - the church with the lukewarm faith (3:16). 	
5	Learning to hear the voice of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience (Job) • Through his Word • Submit to His will • Power of relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ God ○ Spouse ○ Children ○ Brothers ○ Sisters ○ Mankind 	



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		○ Co-workers	
6	Active Listening	• Review active listening scenarios	

Summary	<p>These are tips to becoming an effective listener. Before we can communicate the solution, we must fully understand the issue. That understanding will come from our ability to hear the members and the voice of God. We can be the voice of reason and healing if we slow down and learn to listen.</p> <p>Being an effective listener will enhance every relationship you have; with God, spouse, children, co-workers and humanity in general.</p>
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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Men communicate in order to make a point.	Women communicate in order to make a friend.
Men see the home as a place of refuge and tranquility.	Women see the home as an extension of themselves and their place in society.
Men link romantic love with warmth and pleasure.	Women link romantic love with self-esteem.
Men are primarily task and goal oriented.	Women are primarily people oriented.
Men seek fulfillment through achievement (work, hobbies, and so forth).	Women seek fulfillment through others (children, husband, and so forth).
Men are competitive.	Women are cooperative.
Men project their public image.	Women adopt their public image.
Men identify themselves by what they do.	Women identify themselves by what others think of them.
Men are troubled by feelings of inadequacy.	Women are troubled by feelings of loneliness.
Men withdraw when facing overwhelming problems.	Women reach out when facing overwhelming problems.
Men seek an answer.	Women seek a process.



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Hearing vs. Listening

Do you think there is a difference between hearing and listening? You are right, there is! Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sound by the ear. If you are not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens. Listening, however, is something you consciously choose to do. Listening requires concentration so that your brain processes meaning from words and sentences. Listening leads to learning.

When a person responds to your words by saying "I hear you," you may sometimes wonder if he is truly listening to you. Perhaps you find your mind wandering off when someone is sharing her thoughts with you. Hearing and listening have quite different meanings. Hearing is a passive occurrence that requires no effort. Listening, on the other hand, is a conscious choice that demands your attention and concentration.

Considerations

Everyone wants to be heard and understood, but at one time or another most people don't listen and fail to understand the meaning of another person's words. It's a fundamental human need to have your feelings acknowledged, whether or not someone agrees with you. Honest to goodness listening creates an intimate connection and makes you feel cared about.

Hearing

You can hear someone speak without listening to the words. Hearing defines only the physical measurement of the sound waves that are transmitted to the ear and into the brain where they are processed into audible information. Hearing occurs with or without your consent. The National Youth Council says hearing is such a passive quality, it occurs even while you sleep. When you merely hear someone's words but are not listening to what's being said, it can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities and resentments.

Listening Skills

Listening goes far beyond your natural hearing process. It means paying attention to the words that are being spoken with the intention of understanding the other person. Your personal perceptions and prejudices can affect the quality of your listening skills. For example, if you feel you are better off (financially, intellectually, socially) than the person you are listening to, you may dismiss much of what she is saying because of your perceived superiority.

Types

There are four basic levels of hearing and listening, according to Toast Masters. You can easily fall into one of these categories in different conversations. **A non-listener** is totally preoccupied with his personal thoughts and though he hears words, he doesn't listen to what is being said. **Passive listeners** hear the words but don't fully absorb or understand them. **Listeners** pay attention to the speaker, but grasp only some of the intended message. **Active listeners** are completely focused on the speaker and understand the meaning of the words without distortion.



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Solution

A good listener understands that communication is a two-way street. He refrains from interrupting a speaker with his own thoughts. Good listening also requires keeping an open mind, refraining from judgment and making direct eye contact. Finally, a good listener will not glance up at the clock or look down at his watch while the other person is speaking.

Difference between Listening and Hearing

Key Difference: Hearing is one of the five senses of a person and it is the ability to perceive sound by detecting vibrations through an organ such as the ear. Listening also known as 'active listening' is a technique used in communication which requires a person to pay attention to the speaker and provide feedback. Listening is a step further than hearing, where after the brain receives the nerve impulses and deciphers it, it then sends feedback.

Hearing and Listening, though synonymous, are complete different things. You can listen to someone without actually hearing anything. Let's put it this way, have you ever day dreamed in class? In this, though you were hearing the noise in the classroom, you did not listen to what the teacher was saying. Listening also known as 'active listening' is a technique used in communication which requires a person to pay attention to the speaker and provide feedback. Listening is a step further than hearing, where after the brain receives the nerve impulses and deciphers it, it then sends feedback. Listening requires concentration, deriving meaning from the sound that is heard and reacting to it. Listening is a process of communication, where if the person is not listening it can cause a break in communication. Listening is defined by Merriam--Webster as, "to hear something with thoughtful attention: give consideration."

There are four types of communicators, a '**non-listener**' is a person that is preoccupied with his/her own thoughts and though he is hearing he is not paying attention; '**passive listeners**' hear the words but do not absorb the meaning and only provide vague answers; '**listeners**' hear and listen, but they only grasp the meaning of talks that interests them, this is most common for people who do not want to listen to a topic on which their views differ and will cease to listen to that and start providing their own ideas. Finally '**active listeners**' are the best listeners, not only do they hear the person speak, but they also listen with patience and an open mind. They are completely focused on the speaker.

It is said that a good listener becomes the best communicator as he/she understands the value of the words and emotions. They take in importance of speaking in a clear manner to remove chances of misunderstandings. An active listener has lesser chances of misunderstanding and misinterpreting ideas and words as they also pick up on emotions that are attached with the words.

So the main difference between hearing and listening is, while listening only refers to your ears picking up noise, listening means to interpret the noise, understand it and provide an adequate response to it. Listening also uses other sense in order to be receptive to the other person's body language.



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EXAMPLES OF LISTENING

Mark 10:17-26

17 And when he was gone forth into the way , there came one running , and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery , Do not kill , Do not steal , Do not bear false witness , Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest : go thy way , sell whatsoever thou hast , and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come , take up the cross, and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved : for he had great possessions. 23 And Jesus looked round about , and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26

Matthew 15:22-28 -crumbs from the masters table

22 And, behold , a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying , Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil . 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying , Send her away ; for she crieth after us. 24 But he answered and said , I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying , Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said , It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27 And she said , Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt . And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 8:19-22 (King James Version) Follow me

19 And a certain scribe came , and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest . 20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Luke 9:57-62-follow me

57 And it came to pass , that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest . 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said , Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61 And another also said , Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell , which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back , is fit for the kingdom of God.

Matthew 9:1-6-Heard their thoughts

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over , and came into his own city. 2 And, behold , they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son,



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be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee. **3** And, behold , certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth . **4** And Jesus knowing their thoughts said , Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? **5** For whether is easier, to say , Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say , Arise , and walk ? **6** But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise , take up thy bed, and go unto thine house

Matthew 12:22-28-Heard their thoughts

22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil , blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw . **23** And all the people were amazed , and said , Is not this the son of David? **24** But when the Pharisees heard it, they said , This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. **25** And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand : **26** And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand ? **27** And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out ? therefore they shall be your judges. **28** But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Revelation 2:7 KJV

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16

9 But as it is written , Eye hath not seen , nor ear heard , neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. **10** But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. **11** For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received , not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. **13** Which things also we speak , not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned . **15** But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. **16** For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ

Job 42:1-7

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said , **2** I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. **3** Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. **4** Hear , I beseech thee, and I will speak : I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. **5** I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. **6** Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. **7** And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right , as my servant Job hath



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Isaiah 30:21

"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Jeremiah 29:12-13

"Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart

Psalms 37:23-25

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall , he shall not be utterly cast down : for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken , nor his seed begging bread.

Luke 22:41-44

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down , and prayed , 42 Saying , Father, if thou be willing , remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done . 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Family Scriptures

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath : but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Colossians 3:18-21

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. 20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged

Ephesians 5:20-30

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives



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be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones

Matthew 19:5-6

And said , For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together , let not man put asunder

HEAR YOUR LEADER

Hebrews 13:17

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves : for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief : for that is unprofitable for you.

LISTENING TECHNIQUES

1. Stop Talking

“If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear.” Mark Twain. Don't talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. Stop, just listen. When the other person has finished talking you may need to clarify to ensure you have received their message accurately.

2. Prepare Yourself to Listen

Relax. Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind. The human mind is easily distracted by other thoughts – what's for lunch, what time do I need to leave to catch my train, is it going to rain – try to put other thoughts out of mind and concentrate on the messages that are being communicated.

3. Put the Speaker at Ease

Help the speaker to feel free to speak. Remember their needs and concerns. Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact but don't stare – show you are listening and understanding what is being said.



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4. Remove Distractions

Focus on what is being said: don't doodle, shuffle papers, look out the window, pick your fingernails or similar. Avoid unnecessary interruptions. These behaviours disrupt the listening process and send messages to the speaker that you are bored or distracted.

5. Empathise

Try to understand the other person's point of view. Look at issues from their perspective. Let go of preconceived ideas. By having an open mind we can more fully empathise with the speaker. If the speaker says something that you disagree with then wait and construct an argument to counter what is said but keep an open mind to the views and opinions of others.

See our page: [What is Empathy?](#)

6. Be Patient

A pause, even a long pause, does not necessarily mean that the speaker has finished. Be patient and let the speaker continue in their own time, sometimes it takes time to formulate what to say and how to say it. Never interrupt or finish a sentence for someone.

7. Avoid Personal Prejudice

Try to be impartial. Don't become irritated and don't let the person's habits or mannerisms distract you from what they are really saying. Everybody has a different way of speaking - some people are for example more nervous or shy than others, some have regional accents or make excessive arm movements, some people like to pace whilst talking - others like to sit still. Focus on what is being said and try to ignore styles of delivery.

8. Listen to the Tone

Volume and tone both add to what someone is saying. A good speaker will use both volume and tone to their advantage to keep an audience attentive; everybody will use pitch, tone and volume of voice in certain situations – let these help you to understand the emphasis of what is being said.

See our page: [Effective Speaking](#) for more.



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9. Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words

You need to get the whole picture, not just isolated bits and pieces. Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information to reveal the ideas of others. With proper concentration, letting go of distractions, and focus this becomes easier.

10. Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication

Gestures, facial expressions, and eye-movements can all be important. We don't just listen with our ears but also with our eyes – watch and pick up the additional information being transmitted via non-verbal communication.

Find more at: <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html#ixzz2wWWXnbBY>

10 Steps To Effective Listening

by Dianne Schilling

Also see this post by Dianne Schilling: [Simple Secrets of Happiness](#)

In today's high-tech, high-speed, high-stress world, communication is more important than ever, yet we seem to devote less and less time to really listening to one another. Genuine listening has become a rare gift—the gift of time. It helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy. At work, effective listening means fewer errors and less wasted time. At home, it helps develop resourceful, self-reliant kids who can solve their own problems. Listening builds friendships and careers. It saves money and marriages.

Here are 10 tips to help you develop effective listening skills.

Step 1: Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.

Talking to someone while they scan the room, study a computer screen, or gaze out the window is like trying to hit a moving target. How much of the person's divided attention you are actually getting? Fifty percent? Five percent? If the person were your child you might demand, "Look at me when I'm talking to you," but that's not the sort of thing we say to a lover, friend or colleague.



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In most Western cultures, eye contact is considered a basic ingredient of effective communication. When we talk, we look each other in the eye. That doesn't mean that you can't carry on a conversation from across the room, or from another room, but if the conversation continues for any length of time, you (or the other person) will get up and move. The desire for better communication pulls you together.

Do your conversational partners the courtesy of turning to face them. Put aside papers, books, the phone and other distractions. Look at them, even if they don't look at you. Shyness, uncertainty, shame, guilt, or other emotions, along with cultural taboos, can inhibit eye contact in some people under some circumstances. Excuse the other guy, but stay focused yourself.

Step 2: Be attentive, but relaxed.

Now that you've made eye contact, relax. You don't have to stare fixedly at the other person. You can look away now and then and carry on like a normal person. The important thing is to be attentive. The dictionary says that to "attend" another person means to:

- be present
- give attention
- apply or direct yourself
- pay attention
- remain ready to serve

Mentally screen out distractions, like background activity and noise. In addition, try not to focus on the speaker's accent or speech mannerisms to the point where they become distractions. Finally, don't be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.

Step 3: Keep an open mind.

Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things she tells you. If what she says alarms you, go ahead and feel alarmed, but don't say to yourself, "Well, that was a stupid move." As soon as you indulge in judgmental bemusements, you've compromised your effectiveness as a listener.

Listen without jumping to conclusions. Remember that the speaker is using language to represent the thoughts and feelings inside her brain. You don't know what those thoughts and feelings are and the only way you'll find out is by listening.

Don't be a sentence-grabber. Occasionally my partner can't slow his mental pace enough to listen effectively, so he tries to speed up mine by interrupting and finishing my sentences. This usually lands him way off base, because he is following his own train of thought and doesn't learn where my thoughts are



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headed. After a couple of rounds of this, I usually ask, “Do you want to have this conversation by yourself, or do you want to hear what I have to say?” I wouldn’t do that with everyone, but it works with him.

Step 4: Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.

Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being communicated. Whether a literal picture, or an arrangement of abstract concepts, your brain will do the necessary work if you stay focused, with senses fully alert. When listening for long stretches, concentrate on, and remember, key words and phrases.

When it’s your turn to listen, don’t spend the time planning what to say next. You can’t rehearse and listen at the same time. Think only about what the other person is saying.

Finally, concentrate on what is being said, even if it bores you. If your thoughts start to wander, immediately force yourself to refocus.

Step 5: Don’t interrupt and don’t impose your “solutions.”

Children used to be taught that it’s rude to interrupt. I’m not sure that message is getting across anymore. Certainly the opposite is being modeled on the majority of talk shows and reality programs, where loud, aggressive, in-your-face behavior is condoned, if not encouraged.

Interrupting sends a variety of messages. It says:

- “I’m more important than you are.”
- “What I have to say is more interesting, accurate or relevant.”
- “I don’t really care what you think.”
- “I don’t have time for your opinion.”
- “This isn’t a conversation, it’s a contest, and I’m going to win.”

We all think and speak at different rates. If you are a quick thinker and an agile talker, the burden is on you to relax your pace for the slower, more thoughtful communicator—or for the guy who has trouble expressing himself.

When listening to someone talk about a problem, refrain from suggesting solutions. Most of us don’t want your advice anyway. If we do, we’ll ask for it. Most of us prefer to figure out our own solutions. We need you to listen and help us do that. Somewhere way down the line, if you are absolutely bursting with a brilliant solution, at least get the speaker’s permission. Ask, “Would you like to hear my ideas?”



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Step 6: Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions.

When you don't understand something, of course you should ask the speaker to explain it to you. But rather than interrupt, wait until the speaker pauses. Then say something like, "Back up a second. I didn't understand what you just said about..."

Step 7: Ask questions only to ensure understanding.

At lunch, a colleague is excitedly telling you about her trip to Vermont and all the wonderful things she did and saw. In the course of this chronicle, she mentions that she spent some time with a mutual friend. You jump in with, "Oh, I haven't heard from Alice in ages. How is she?" and, just like that, discussion shifts to Alice and her divorce, and the poor kids, which leads to a comparison of custody laws, and before you know it an hour is gone and Vermont is a distant memory.

This particular conversational affront happens all the time. Our questions lead people in directions that have nothing to do with where *they* thought they were going. Sometimes we work our way back to the original topic, but very often we don't.

When you notice that your question has led the speaker astray, take responsibility for getting the conversation back on track by saying something like, "It was great to hear about Alice, but tell me more about your adventure in Vermont."

Step 8: Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.

If you feel sad when the person with whom you are talking expresses sadness, joyful when she expresses joy, fearful when she describes her fears—and convey those feelings through your facial expressions and words—then your effectiveness as a listener is assured. Empathy is the heart and soul of good listening.

To experience empathy, you have to put yourself in the other person's place and allow yourself to feel what it is like to *be her* at that moment. This is not an easy thing to do. It takes energy and concentration. But it is a generous and helpful thing to do, and it facilitates communication like nothing else does.

Step 9: Give the speaker regular feedback.

Show that you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting the speaker's feelings. "You must be thrilled!" "What a terrible ordeal for you." "I can see that you are confused." If the speaker's feelings are hidden or unclear, then occasionally paraphrase the content of the message. Or just nod and show your understanding through appropriate facial expressions and an occasional well-timed "hmmm" or "uh huh."

The idea is to give the speaker some proof that you are listening, and that you are following her train of thought—not off indulging in your own fantasies while she talks to the ether.



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In task situations, regardless of whether at work or home, always restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly.

Step 10: Pay attention to what *isn't* said—to nonverbal cues.

If you exclude email, the majority of direct communication is probably nonverbal. We glean a great deal of information about each other without saying a word. Even over the telephone, you can learn almost as much about a person from the tone and cadence of her voice than from anything she says. When I talk to my best friend, it doesn't matter what we chat about, if I hear a lilt and laughter in her voice, I feel reassured that she's doing well.

Face to face with a person, you can detect enthusiasm, boredom, or irritation very quickly in the expression around the eyes, the set of the mouth, the slope of the shoulders. These are clues you can't ignore. When listening, remember that words convey only a fraction of the message.

Listening Skills Exercise: Summarize, Summarize, Summarize!

For at least one week, at the end of every conversation in which information is exchanged, conclude with a summary statement. In conversations that result in agreements about future obligations or activities, summarizing will not only ensure accurate follow-through, it will feel perfectly natural. In conversations that do not include agreements, if summarizing feels awkward just explain that you are doing it as an exercise.



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The Technique. Active listening is really 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 own 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.



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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 have the ability to 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..."

7 Barriers to Active Listening:

Why we don't listen as well as we could

"As a leader you have to be a really good listener. You need to know your own mind but there is no point in imposing your views on others without some debate. No one has a monopoly on good ideas or good advice.

Get out there, listen to people, draw people out, and learn from them."

~ Richard Branson, ["Five steps to start and make business work"](#)

Effective leaders and influencers master the art of listening, and they understand that people want to be heard. In our fast-paced world, active and empathetic listening is a rarity, and it's not as simple as it sounds. Even if we know how to listen, we often don't for a number of reasons.

Next time you talk to someone, watch for the following seven common listening barriers that block a good conversation flow and may cause misunderstandings:

1. We join the conversation with predetermined attitude and assumptions about the other person or the subject matter to be discussed. Good conversations have the power to create new shared meaning and understanding, but it is only possible if we are open enough to consider those new possibilities. So many people use conversations just to reiterate their own positions on issues. Little is gained with such approach. Instead, join a conversation with an open mind and desire to learn something new. Listen with curiosity and without bias.

2. We are so preoccupied with our own thoughts that we are unable to listen attentively. Maybe, we are distracted by something unrelated to the topic of the conversation, or we are busy developing our own response and miss what's being said. It's not easy to pay focused attention to the other person's words. Our prefrontal cortex, the brain region implicated in planning complex cognitive tasks, decision making, and moderating correct social behavior, is easily overwhelmed. We can process just about seven pieces of information in our conscious mind at any given moment. It makes it impossible to attend to several things simultaneously that require our concentration. We have to train and discipline our mind to listen actively and push any other distracting thoughts aside.



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3. We are completing the other person's thoughts and jumping to conclusions. How often do we hear something and say to ourselves: "Oh, I know where she is going with it." We attribute ideas, motivation, and intentions to others that they may not have. This leads to misunderstandings. This is especially true if we have known the conversation participants for a long time. We feel like we know what they will say. Patience pays off in conversations. Let the others finish their thoughts and don't assume you already know what they are going to say.

4. We engage in selective listening. It occurs when we listen only to what we want to hear. We like to be right, and our minds like consistency. We don't feel comfortable when something upsets our belief system. It's easier to ignore that information. The downside is that we can't learn from others or collaborate effectively. To overcome the habit of selective listening, paraphrase or mirror back what you hear to ensure you understand other points of view. Engage in conversations with people who you know will disagree with you and learn to discuss your disagreements respectfully. Encourage different opinions with the intention of considering them thoroughly and learning from them.

5. We feel too tired, anxious, or angry to listen actively. Our brains run on glucose. The glucose levels drop when we are tired, so we no longer have the energy to think clearly. When we experience strong negative emotions, as when we are angry or under stress, the glucose goes from the prefrontal cortex to the amygdala in the limbic system of the brain, responsible for the emotional control and memory of our emotional reactions. The amygdala triggers the "fight or flight" mode. As a result, our mind "freezes," and we either launch verbal attacks or withdraw from the dialogue. Strong feelings and emotions affect our listening, reasoning and judgment. If the parties feel overwhelmed, a better strategy is to take a break from the conversation.

6. We don't pay enough attention to body language and supersegmentals, such as intonation, rate of speech, emphasis, or tone. We can focus not only on what's being said, but also on what's not being said. The supersegmentals and body language give away clues about people's emotions, feelings, stress levels that provide additional information that may not be expressed in words. To be an active listener, you have to be a good observer too.

7. We are in a hurry. We don't have time to listen and can't wait for the other people to finish their thoughts so that we could get on with our business. People will sense that you don't really want to listen to them. If you find yourself always trying to control the pace of conversations, talk too fast, or urge others to get to the point, try to consciously slow yourself down. Find a better time to talk. A conversation is not a race to the finish line.



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BARRIERS TO LISTENING

1. Noise

Environmental Noise: Many of us live in a noisy world; loud music, loud voices, traffic, barking dogs, etc. Search for quiet areas to talk if it is an important conversation. Listening is hard enough without the additions of distracting external noise.

In addition to environmental noises, there is also *physiological noise* that stems from our body aches and pains that make it difficult to focus on the speaker, as well as, *psychological noise* such as internal chatter.

Many of us have a non-stop active stream of internal conversation. It takes practice to empty out our internal chatter and listen carefully to what the speaker is saying and how they are saying it.

Solution: Focus on your breath, noticing both the internal and external noises but not dwelling on them. Instead focus on the person in front of you with the utmost curiosity. Listen with your ears, heart and all of your senses; let the person in front of you become the foreground and everything else recede into the background.

2. Worry, fear, anger

When we can't focus because our emotions are out of control, it helps to share this with the speaker. You may say something like *"I can't seem to listen to you right now, because I am so angry. Can we talk another time?"*

Solution: If this is not possible, see if you can "bracket" your challenges for the moment, meaning put them aside in order to focus. No worries, they won't go away and you can pick them up when you are ready.

3. Lack of attention span

Brain Speed (mind wanders) – thoughts move about four times as fast as speech, making it easy to get distracted. Also, your individual style and that of the speaker's may not be matched. For example, they



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Speak really slowly and you are racing ahead, or perhaps they talk rapidly with lots of details and it's hard to keep up.

Notice if you are internally saying, *"Get to the point," "Cut to the chase."* Our internal filters are the way most of us process information, but by recognizing and acknowledging this voice, we can tune it out and listen to them.

Solution: Get curious about what they are saying and paraphrase regularly to ensure you understand. Focus on the **precise** words they are saying. This forces you to concentrate. If the speaker speaks very fast, try to break it up with summarizing after key points. Always check with the speaker to ensure you heard correctly.

4. You like to talk

You talk a lot and the other person cannot get a word in. If you hear your voice more than the other voice you may want to adjust your output.

The latest studies show that the human brain can really only hold on to four things at a time, so by talking for 5-10 minutes or more, the other person will remember only a small part of what you say. [Click here](#) to read more on "Psychology of Language."

Solution: Apologize and say, *"I really want to hear from you, I know I've been monopolizing the conversation."*

In the future, try to remember to speak briefly, try speaking for only a few sentences; about 30 seconds is about all the brain can really take in. Really!

As the listener of someone who hardly takes a breath when speaking, you will need to respectfully interrupt if you want to get a word in. Raise your hand, give a time out signal, or clear your throat and ask, *"I have another perspective, would you like to hear it?"*

5. Boredom



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You're bored with subject so you interject something about yourself. You find their tone of voice monotonous or they can't seem to get to the point.

Solution: Ask questions and then paraphrase. Soon the conversation becomes a dialogue and not a monologue. Once involved you can become more engaged. Also see if you can listen beyond and behind the words to what is being unsaid and you become a more active participant to the conversation.

6. You fear running out of time

You have another engagement and become distracted. You fear there will be no time for your side of the story.

Solution: Signal time out, or point to your watch for a time check. Let them know that you are running out of time and want to share something important before you have to leave. A preventative technique is to share on the front end how much time you have for the conversation and ask them to keep it brief.

7. Language differences or accents

Solution: You may need to lean in closely if the accent is hard to understand. Here again, paraphrasing often helps to ensure you are hearing correctly. Pay attention to how the person creates certain sounds and file it away so you understand the next time you hear it, i.e. non-English speakers may say the "a" sound differently. You may also ask your partner to slow down or repeat what they said so you can make sure you heard correctly.

8. Bias or prejudice

When we don't agree with the speaker we may try to preserve our ways of thinking to avoid being convinced of something different, and therefore, do not listen to what they are saying. Sometimes with differences in race, age, occupation or appearance we may make assumptions about what they are saying that has nothing to do with what they are actually saying or mean.



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Solution: It helps to know our own biases, become aware of when we make assumptions and be open to different opinions and the possibility of being influenced. Interrogate your own assumptions with questions *"Is that really true?" "What am I assuming and why?" "Are my assumptions valid?"*

9. Response Preparation

Our tendency to rehearse what we are going to say while the other speaker is talking, or "re-loading" is probably the most common form of non-listening. You are listening to a conversation you are having with yourself, commenting on and filtering what is being said.

Solution: Catch yourself doing this and tell yourself that by focusing on the person and understanding them, you will be able to respond even more effectively. The more you deeply listen, the more likely you can respond thoughtfully when it is your turn.



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Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback – Learning Series

Topic VII: Active Listening

Topic VII - Active Listening Scenarios Knowledge Check - Key

understand how he or she feels, and you understand the meaning and importance of their message. Poor listening skills can damage a coaching relationship and it can be difficult to reestablish trust.

In the “Active Listening” topic, a number of “Keys to Active Listening” were presented. This worksheet will provide a number of scenarios. For each scenario you are asked to identify the “Key to Active Listening” that is being demonstrated or could be used to improve the coaching moment. Please refer to the “Active Listening” topic message to refresh your memory.

1. **Active Listening Scenario:** Adrienne scheduled a meeting with Jasper to discuss his year-end review. During the first 20 minutes of the 30-minute meeting, Adrienne talks through the feedback she has for Jasper. She uses the last 10 minutes to explain Jasper’s rating to him. Adrienne leaves the meeting feeling as though she has communicated everything she needed to tell Jasper in a short meeting! Jasper leaves the meeting wondering what happened...

Question: Which “Key to Active Listening” could be used to improve this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. **Let the employee speak**

The correct answer is **b. Let the employee speak**. Adrienne may have crossed everything off of her agenda, but she didn’t even consider what Jasper may have had to say. She didn’t give him an opportunity to ask questions about the feedback he received or his rating. As a result, Jasper left the meeting feeling confused and unheard. Remember – even though you may be leading the meeting – it’s critical that you let your employee speak and make him or her feel heard.

- c. Suspend judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

2. **Active Listening Scenario:** During a coaching conversation, Ahmed and Sharon have the following exchange:



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Sharon: *"I am not getting along with the new guy, Dan. I'm trying my best to work with him, but I feel like I have to prepare myself for awkward exchanges and tense interactions. You're able to work with him. How would you handle the situation?"*

Ahmed: *"It's great that you recognize that it's a difficult working relationship, and I appreciate that you've brought the situation to my attention. My recommendation is to approach the situation differently. Try not to go into conversations with Dan expecting awkward exchanges and tense interactions. Put yourself in a neutral place before you approach Dan or when he approaches you. If that doesn't work, consider having a direct conversation with Dan about the situation. If you feel uncomfortable doing so, I'd be happy to facilitate a conversation to make the working relationship more at ease."*

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. **Give feedback**

The correct answer is **e. Give feedback**. Ahmed listens to Sharon's concerns, and waits until she asks for feedback to provide his recommendations. He doesn't try to figure out why they don't get along and he doesn't judge her or Dan for their "awkward interactions". He presents one solution to the situation and suggests a back-up in case that doesn't work. Ahmed is demonstrating the principles of active listening – and good coaching.

3. **Active Listening Scenario:** In preparing for her weekly check-in with Ramma, Myra reserved a conference room so they'd be free from distractions during their conversation. She shows up with a notepad and pen, but leaves her phone in her office. When Ramma joins her, Myra outlines the purpose of the meeting. While Ramma speaks, Myra is attentive and takes a few quick notes. In closing the meeting, Myra restates Ramma's key points and summarizes their next steps.

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. **Be present and focused**

The correct answer is **a. Be present and focused**. Myra is clearly present and focused in her meeting with Ramma. She's removed all distractions and potential for interruptions. She reminds them both of the purpose of the meeting, and she's clearly attending to what Ramma's saying by taking notes and summarizing their conversations. Be careful not to take too many notes. It could alarm your employee (as he or she wonders what you're documenting) and distract you from listening.

- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

4. **Active Listening Scenario:** Zach scheduled a meeting with Amanda to discuss an error in a report he discovered. The report has already been published – and to the Commonwealth website for all to see. When Amanda arrives at the meeting, she says, "What did you do? How did this happen? We can't have errors like this going out in our reports!"



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Question: Which “Key to Active Listening” could be used to improve this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. **Suspend the judgment**

The correct answer is **c. Suspend the judgment**. Amanda enters the meeting with her judgments on display. She blames Zach instantly, instead of keeping an open mind about the situation. A more effective approach would have been to separate the person and the problem. Amanda should have kept the meeting focused on finding a solution to the erroneous published report. If the error is Zach’s fault, Amanda should have a separate conversation about how to prevent such errors in the future.

- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

5. **Active Listening Scenario:** Jeric is meeting with Kate to discuss her goals. Kate’s face is drawn, her arms are crossed, and she’s leaning away from Jeric. Jeric works down the list of goals, but all Kate responds with is one-word answers – sure, yeah, okay. Something is clearly wrong, and Jeric says, “Kate, I can tell something else is on your mind. Let’s put your goals aside for now and talk about it.” Kate drops her arms to her sides, and shares with Jeric that she’s upset that she didn’t receive the promotion she was hoping for.

Question: Which “Key to Active Listening” is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. **Identify the feelings behind the words**

The correct answer is **d. Identify the feelings behind the words**. Jeric looks beyond Kate’s words to her reactions and body language to understand what she’s feeling. She’s clearly disengaged with Jeric and the goals conversation. By acknowledging Kate’s feelings, Jeric gains her trust and gets her to open up about her disappointment.

- e. Give feedback