

1 IT'S ALL ABOUT 'ATTITUDE'

Your ATTITUDE has a lot to do with HOW you listen to someone speaking. In order to listen well, approach the conversation with an open mind. It is important to realize that what the person is saying is important, even if you have prior feelings about the topic. If you have an attitude that everyone deserves respect when being listened to, you will be a better participant and get more out of what you are hearing. We usually can learn something from everyone. If you have an attitude that this is true, then you usually will be a better listener and provide the speaker with more respect & attention. Listen with a view to comprehend and understand their viewpoint, not yours!

2 "PAY ATTENTION - DUH!"

It only makes sense that to listen you have to pay attention but for many, that is easier said than done. ATTENTION is the fundamental difference between hearing and listening. It takes intentional effort on our part. We may have a short attention span, become easily distracted or bored, have a hard time focusing, or are focused more on what we are thinking or feeling than what the speaker is actually saying. Try to keep internal issues out of the mix and don't be a 'know it all'! Listening with your full attention means remaining neutral & not forming opinions until they finish talking. Listening for key points that you want to retain will help keep you engaged.

5 TIPS TO DO MORE THAN JUST HEAR

ACTIVE LISTENING THE BASICS

Active listening refers to a pattern of listening that keeps you engaged in conversation in a positive way. It is the process of listening attentively while someone else speaks, paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said, while withholding judgment and advice. Active listening serves the purpose of earning the trust of others and helping you to understand their situations, comprising of both a desire to comprehend as well as to offer support and empathy to the speaker.

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4 PRACTICE EMPATHY

Seek to understand before being understood! Do this by trying to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Try to feel what the other person is feeling while they're talking to you. Imagine yourself in their situation. What would you feel? How would you react? Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being communicated. Empathy goes beyond commiseration. Sympathy is "feeling for someone," empathy is "feeling AS someone." Attempt to connect emotionally with the person while simultaneously attempting to connect cognitively.

3 ADJUSTMENT

Rather than assuming what the speaker should be saying or steering the conversation in one direction, ADJUSTMENT allows you to go with the flow and adapt to what is happening. The more you can adapt to where the speaker is taking the conversation, the better listener you will be. If you are not able to adjust to where a speaker is going, you won't be able to have an open mind (back to the first basic skill of listening-attitude). Having an open mind allows us to adjust to what is being said and, in the end, makes us better able to take in what we are hearing. Don't indulge in negativity along the way- Good listeners are even open to ideas that contradict their own!

5 GET ON THE SAME PAGE

RESPOND-MIRROR-CLARIFY: Repeat back to the person what you think he or she said to make certain you understand. A technique to connect emotionally is to ask a viewpoint question, how the person feels about the situation or make a statement about how you believe the person feels then make sure you wait and listen. Whatever the response, it is intended to clarify the facts or information being presented to obtain understanding, meaning and to identify & respond to the emotions or feelings of the other person.