The Lost Art of Listening

The Added Value of Auditory Processing In a Visual Processing World

Listening Is ESSENTIAL

Costs of Poor Listening

Productivity is cut in ½
All sorts of relationship problems
Contributing factor in drug/alcohol abuse
For decades, marriage counselors have told us most marriage conflicts are caused by poor listening

Listening is a GIFT

A gift you give someone else
A gift you give yourself
When you give someone what they need, they’ll give you whatever you need in return
Listening to others is the most effective way we have of showing that we care

Listening fulfills a deep need to be heard and understood
Listening Defined

Comes from two Anglo-Saxon root words:
- “to hear”
- “to wait in suspense”

One of the most difficult parts of communicating

Listening is:
- Sensing
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding

One of the most difficult things we’ll learn to do

Obstacles to Good Listening

- EGO – self-centeredness
  valuing one’s own words/opinions over others

- Emotional filters and Past experiences
  blind spots/prejudices

- Anxiety, stress, fear
  preoccupation with another problem

- Fatigue
  listening requires a great deal of energy

- External Noise = Excess Capacity
  we “listen” to many more words than we “hear”

We must learn to listen to intent in addition to content

- Over 600,000 words in the English language
- Most of us use about 500 words at any given time
- Each word can have dozens of interpretive meanings (“Oh!”)
- Intent becomes very important in understanding one another (Rate yourself)
Improve Your Listening

• Non-verbal listening, AKA, “Attending”
  Adjust your mind to “listen to nothing and everything simultaneously”
• Empathy
  How to respond in a way that encourages further communication
• Asking Questions
  The right questions can draw people out and get them on your side
• Non-verbal Communications
  Take advantage of the power of non-verbal communications
• Silence is “golden”
  Don’t confuse silence with indifference/don’t be afraid of silence

Improve Your Listening:
Attending

• Eye motion/eye contact
• Posture
• Facial expressions
• Verbalization
• Short Questions
• Signals
• Checked-out
• Environment
• Schedule
• Eliminate barriers
• Reaction to speaker
• Attempt to understand, but not form an opinion
• Guard against evaluating what is heard/content
• Resist forming an evaluation of the speaker
• Open-minded listening
• Listen with respect and dignity for speaker
• Nix any attitude of superiority
• Relax, control stress, fear and anxiety

Improve Your Listening:
Empathy

• the projection of one’s own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him/her better
• participating in another person’s feelings or ideas
• NOT to be confused with “sympathy” – or sharing someone’s emotions so intensely that whatever affects them also affects you
Japanese symbol for “listening” is “an ear on a gate”
To listen means to go through the gate and enter into that person’s world to hear what they are saying.

In order to “empathize” good listeners must:
- curb your own opinions, emotions and preoccupations
- listen closely to body language and other signals as well as words
- indicate to the speaker that you have heard and are trying to understand
- shift to higher concentration, focusing on the person as hard as you can
- get rid of external distractions

Empathy is active listening, and requires listening to ourselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Listening</th>
<th>Listening to Ourselves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively listen to the speaker</td>
<td>Emotions or shared experiences are noted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate the verbal and non-verbal cues</td>
<td>Take care not to let emotions cause loss of objectivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze the message</td>
<td>Experiences don’t need to be identical, but emotions should be similar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond in a way that encourages further communication</td>
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Empathy is a great way to display acceptance of the other person

• The speaker and the listener benefit

• The speaker understands a sincere attempt is being made to understand

• The listener is involved with the acceptance of another person

When the Listener uses EMPATHY

• in control of the conversation
• encourages the speaker to open up
• determines the agenda by feedback
• learns something from the speaker
• helps another person fulfill a need

• In the end, the listener gets what he/she needs

Improve Your Listening:
Ask Questions

Problems are solved by dealing with facts

Facts that cause problems and create emotions can be learned by asking questions
Asking Questions will:

- Draw people out
- Satisfy your curiosity
- Help with problem solving
- Help reveal more information about the subject
- Show we are listening
- Get the speaker back on track
- Clarify the message
- Help us understand the speaker better

Closed-ended or Open-ended Questions?

- Closed-ended require only a word or two in reply
- Closed-ended actually suggest the agenda
- With closed-ended, the questioner has to think ahead about the next question in case the speaker’s answer is too short
- Open-ended provide information for the listener and help clarify things for the speaker

Improve Your Listening:

SILENCE (a great listening tool)

- Silence makes many listeners uncomfortable
  - We talk to fill a silence with speaking
  - We must work at being comfortable and with being quiet
  - Don’t confuse silence with indifference
- There are hundreds of ways to tell a speaker “I’m here.”
COMMUNICATION by the NUMBERS

- Words 7%
- How We Say Words 38%
- Non-verbal Signals 55%

93% of ALL Communication is Non-verbal Transfer

Meaning is in P-E-O-P-L-E
Not in w-o-r-d-s