



In this lesson, we shall convert the concept and principles of listening into the 'How To' to help us improve our listening skills in a structured and organised manner.

■ What is the Starting Point to be a Good Listener?

It starts with a strong belief that listening is an important communication activity. It is probably more important than speaking or anything else. When we truly believe this, somehow our behaviours will be influenced accordingly.

Foremost, we become deeply curious and interested in what the person is saying, soaking in their words, meanings and feelings because we really want to make full sense of what they are trying to express.

As such, we will speak lesser and listen more, by allowing the other person to speak more than us.

■ How to Deal with Distractions when Listening?

There are many forms of distractions, from multi-tasking to engaging in inner self-talks. These will have a huge impact on our listening effectiveness. So, the first thing to do is to be aware and consciously catch ourselves doing any of these things, including ordering ourselves to 'stop it'.

The other distraction is when the other person is not speaking in the way we want them to, so we get irritated, uncomfortable, and lose our patience. Practice calmness and extract the content of their message rather than judging their delivery skills.

■ How to Encourage Others to Speak More?

Sometimes people are discouraged to speak more, because the other person is not paying attention when they are speaking. The best clue is revealed through eye contact; they may be looking at somewhere else, or day dreaming.

Eye contact must be strong for us to listen well, and also for the speaker to know that we are really listening to them. Another way is to display occasional listening sounds and gestures.

For instance, 'Hmm', 'I see', 'Oh', and 'Thank you for sharing with me', etc. to body language like nodding, body bending forward, etc. These go a long way to boost the speaker's confidence and openness to speak more.

■ Why is Interjecting Necessary?

It may be rude to do this in a social conversation,

but it is a must to interject this in a coaching conversation once in a while. The rationale is not only to steer the conversation on the right course, but also to help the speaker aware of what he is saying.

Some interjecting questions are: 'Can you explain this again? What do you mean? Is this what you mean?' And etc. Timing is important to find the 'right moment' to do this. Some ways are: find a pause when they stop talking, ask for permission to go in, or raise your volume a little to gently drown theirs. Finally, find occasions to enthuse, or praise the person for what they are sharing with you.

■ How Much Did You Learn from Here?

- 1 What is the first thing you need to do to be a good listener?
- 2 How do you stay in focus when you are listening?
- 3 What are some sure ways of killing the speaker's enthusiasm?
- 4 Why is interjecting encouraged in a coaching conversation?
- 5 What will you change in your listening style in order to be a better listener?

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Q&A

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DEEP LISTENING SKILLS

"There is a joke that says the one reason why many people are poor listeners is because there is no competition for listening well to compel us to be good at it! There is competition in every other thing in the world except listening. Name it, we have running, mountain climbing, sailing, eating, drinking, and even 'teh tarik' competition but nothing on listening. No wonder people take listening for granted as there is no incentive to be good at it!" -

MICHAEL HEAH (Corporate Coach)

