

LISTENING IS MORE THAN MERELY HEARING

BY WENDY BETANCOURT, ASSISTANT OMBUDSPERSON

Did you know that listening takes up more of your waking hours than any other activity? Many of the important facets of your life are greatly influenced by your skills in listening. The quality of your personal and professional relationships is often measured on your ability to listen effectively. Researchers claim that 75 percent of oral communication is ignored, misunderstood, or quickly forgotten. For example, while in conversation, have you ever found yourself thinking about how you want to respond, problem solve the concern, or simply drifting off into distraction of other topics? A major reason for the poor listening in our society is that at an early age we were not taught the art of listening. According to Franklin Ernst, the typical child in their most impressionable years, receives a steady diet of anti-listening edicts (Ernst, 1999). Such as, "Pretend you don't notice", "He didn't mean what he said", "Don't take it too seriously", or "Don't pay attention to them." In most schools, there are no effective training programs for developing listening skills.

While experts say that we can only listen effectively one-third to two-thirds of the time, we can recognize that when we listen for long time without doing any talking or responding, our listening efficiency begins to drop drastically. So, what is taking place when we are not listening? Hearing. The distinction between hearing and listening is simply to understand the difference between the two terms. Drakeford explains, when we are hearing, we are referring to the psychological sensory processes by which auditory sensations are received by the ears and transmitted to the brain. Listening, refers to a more complex psychological procedure involving interpreting and understanding the significant of the sensory experience (Drakeford, 2010). Simply, we can easily hear what another person is saying without really listening to them. For example, some people may say, "My friends really listen to what I say, while my partner only hears me talk."

"My friends really listen to what I say, while my partner only hears me talk."



LISTENING IS MORE THAN MERELY HEARING (CONT)

BY WENDY BETANCOURT,
ASSISTANT OMBUDSPERSON



Learning to be an effective listener is a difficult task for many people. One approach below is utilizing the skill clusters method by Robert Bolton, Ph.D. (Bolton, 1986).

Attending skills

In this skill you are giving your physical attention to another person and shows that you are interested in what they have to say. Demonstrating your nonverbal communication of this skill indicates you are paying careful attention to the person talking.

Following skills

In this skill you are staying out of the speaker's way. The average "listener" interrupts and diverts the speaker by asking many questions or interjecting with their statements. It is also common for the "listener" to monopolize the conversation and divert the speaker's attention elsewhere.

Reflective listening skills

In this skill it involves the ability to respond reflectively. In a reflective response, the listener restates the feeling and/or content of what the speaker is communicated and does so in a way that demonstrates understanding and acceptance.

References:

Bolton, R. P. (1986). *People Skills- How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Drakeford, J. (2010). *The Awesome Power of the Listening Ear*. Waco.

Ernst, F. (1999). *Who's Listening? A Handbook of the Transactional Analysis of the Listening Function*.

Probation News



Evaluate your listening skills.

CLICK HERE

**to take the active listening quiz.
How well do you listen?**