



CFTDC FACTSHEET – LISTENING SKILLS

AIM

This fact sheet is a review of the skills and roadblocks associated with effective listening.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental communication tool. When someone is willing to stop talking and truly listen to others, communication problems are all but eliminated.

Why are we poor listeners? Many people don't know how to listen. Some reasons include; preoccupation, lack of interest, distraction, assumptions made about the speaker and subject, or simply that people tend to enjoy talking more than listening,

LISTENING BLOCKS

Here are some typical blocks to effective listening:

Rehearsing - Your attention is focussed on preparing your next comment. You may look interested, but your mind is engaged what to say next. For instance, some people rehearse whole chains of responses such as "I'll say.....then he'll say ...," and so on.

Judging - Negatively labelling is extremely limiting. If you prejudge somebody as incompetent or uninformed, you don't pay much attention to what that person says. A basic rule of listening to judge only after you have heard and evaluated the content of the message.

Identifying - This occurs when everything people tell you is referred back to your own experience. They'll tell you about a toothache, which reminds you of your oral surgery causing you to launch into your own story before they can finish theirs.

Advising - You are the great problem solver and don't need to hear more than a few sentences before you provide the right advice. However, while you are coming up with suggestions and convincing someone to try it, you may miss what is most important.

Sparring - This occurs when you debate with people who feel they are unheard because you are quick to disagree.

Being Right - Being right means you'll go to great lengths to avoid being wrong. You can't listen to criticism, be corrected, or accept suggestions.

Derailing - This occurs when you are uncomfortable or bored with a topic and suddenly change the subject thus “derailing” the train of conversation. Joking is another type of derailment.

Dreaming - When we dream, we pretend to listen but really tune the other person out while we drift about in thoughts that are more interesting.

COMPONENTS OF GOOD LISTENING

Some components of good listening include:

- Listen to the speaker until they are finished
- Concentrate on what is said
- Look for feelings, not just words
- Provide non-verbal signals to indicate interest
- Provide encouraging statements
- Paraphrase what you were just told.

Focus your listening by practicing the following skills:

- Listen for main points
- Listen for evidence that supports the message
- Observe the speaker’s manner of presentation e.g., verbal tone and speed
- Develop note-taking skills.

CONCLUSION

While it is impossible to eliminate all barriers to effective listening, a basic understanding of the different types will go a long way towards reducing them. Remind yourself and others of these barriers by referring to this factsheet from time to time and see how learning may be improved.