



"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."
 — Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*



"I'm bilingual, speaking English and body language. I prefer the latter, because I can speak it silently and without listening and while my back is turned."

What is it - the Levels of listening

(1) passive/not listening - noise in background - ignoring

(2) pretend listening - also called 'responsive listening' - using stock nods and smiles and uhm, yes, of course, etc.

(3) biased/projective listening - 'selective listening' and intentionally disregarding/dismissing the other person's views

(4) misunderstood listening - unconsciously overlaying your own interpretations and making things fit when they don't

(5) attentive listening - personally-driven fact gathering and analysis often with manipulation of the other person

(6) active listening - understanding feelings and gathering facts for largely selfish purposes

(7) empathic listening - understanding and checking facts and feelings, usually to listener's personal agenda

(8) facilitative listening - listening, understanding fully, and helping, with the other person's needs uppermost

Listening with Empathy

Why its important

builds trust and respect,

enables the disputants to release their emotions,

reduces tensions,

encourages the surfacing of information, and

creates a safe environment that is conducive to collaborative problem solving.

Of all the communications skills, listening is arguably the one which makes the biggest difference.

The most brilliant and effective speaker ultimately comes undone if he/she fails to listen properly.

Listening does not come naturally to most people, so we need to work hard at it; to stop ourselves 'jumping in' and giving our opinions.

Mostly, people don't listen - they just take turns to speak - we all tend to be more interested in announcing our own views and experiences than really listening and understanding others.

This is ironic since we all like to be listened to and understood. Covey says rightly that when we are understood we feel affirmed and validated.

He coined the expression: 'Seek first to understand, and then to be understood', which serves as a constant reminder for the need to listen to the other person before you can expect them to listen to you.

How you do it

(1) Provide the speaker with your undivided attention. This is one time "multi-tasking" or "rapid refocus" will get you in trouble.

(2) Be non-judgemental. Don't minimize or trivialize the speakers issue.

(3) Read the speaker. Observe the emotions behind the words. Is the speaker angry, afraid, frustrated or resentful. Respond to the emotion as well as the words.

(4) Be Quiet. Don't feel you must have an immediate reply. Often if you allow for some quiet after the speaker has vented, they themselves will break the silence and offer a solution.

(5) Assure your understanding. Ask clarifying questions and restate what you perceive the speaker to be saying.