

**The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.**

George Bernard Shaw

**If we were meant to talk more than we listen, we would have been given two mouths and one ear.**

Mark Twain

### **Common Listening Behaviours**

REHEARSING: \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGING: \_\_\_\_\_

IDENTIFYING: \_\_\_\_\_

ADVISING: \_\_\_\_\_

SPARRING: \_\_\_\_\_

BEING RIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_

DERAILING: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACATING: \_\_\_\_\_

DREAMING: \_\_\_\_\_

Being aware of your behaviour is the first step to being a better listener.

### **Ten Tips to Be a Better Listener**

- 1) Detect whether the other person talking to you is expressing facts or feelings.
- 2) Respond fully to the feelings that someone shares before responding with the facts.
- 3) Use silence when the person talking to you is sharing feelings and you do not know what to say. Simply nod in understanding and let yourself be touched by what they are saying.
- 4) Listen without judgment.
- 5) Listen without thinking about what you are going to say next.
- 6) If your mind wanders, ask for repetition.
- 7) In all cases repeat back what you heard and ask if that is correct.
- 8) Say it honestly, but with consideration for the listener's feelings. Be polite, respectful and sincere.
- 9) Pay attention to the body language, in the speaker and in yourself.
- 10) Do not be invested in being right.

## **10 Ways to Command Listening Attention**

1. Speak more softly.
2. Confuse the listener - say something that doesn't make sense.
3. Use silence to your advantage.
4. Appeal to the listener's values.
5. Create urgency.
6. Ask the listener if she can keep a secret.
7. Tell a humorous story.
8. Speak with enthusiasm and smile a lot.
9. Play with the pace of your speech.
10. Pay a compliment.
11. Others?

## How Do Your Listening Skills Rate?

On a scale of 5 to 1 (5= almost always and 1 = almost never) evaluate yourself on each statement.

### STAYING FOCUSED

Staying focused is about consciously clearing the mental space in which to listen and then keeping your full attention centered on the speaker. Are you able to devote your full attention to the speaker or do you experience lapses in concentration during conversations?

- \_\_\_ 1. I remain focused on the conversation even when I am not that interested in the subject matter.
- \_\_\_ 2. I remain mentally tuned in even when the subject matter is difficult or takes extra effort to understand.
- \_\_\_ 3. When I catch myself looking at, listening to or thinking about something other than what is being said, I consciously redirect my attention back to the conversation.
- \_\_\_ 4. When I disagree with what the other person is saying, I am able to avoid mental arguments.
- \_\_\_ 5. I wait for the other person to stop talking before I formulate my response.

### CAPTURING THE MESSAGE

To do so, you need to maintain a state of mental neutrality, delay judgment and avoid projecting your expectations for the conversation into the speaker's message. Do you listen for what you want to hear? Do you leave conversations unsure of what the speaker was trying to say or discover later that you misunderstood the message?

- \_\_\_ 1. I remain open to hearing the rest of the other person's message even after he/she presents ideas with which I disagree.
- \_\_\_ 2. I avoid anticipating what the other person's main point or conclusion is going to be before he/she is finished talking.
- \_\_\_ 3. I ask the other person to repeat or clarify a point that I don't fully understand.
- \_\_\_ 4. I listen for the overall theme behind the other person's message.
- \_\_\_ 5. I ask questions that help me find out what the other person may have left out or avoided saying.

### HELPING THE SPEAKER

You can help a speaker by avoiding the kind of behaviors that suggest you are not really paying attention and by actively giving supportive feedback, whether verbal or nonverbal. Do you express both physically and verbally that you are listening, or do you display physical actions that convey your less-than-complete listening?

- \_\_\_ 1. I try not to fidget during conversations (playing with paper clips, doodling, drumming my fingers.)
- \_\_\_ 2. I nod my head or indicate agreement verbally even when I'm not completely paying attention to what the other person is saying.
- \_\_\_ 3. I avoid finishing sentences for the other person.
- \_\_\_ 4. I maintain eye contact with any person who is speaking to me.
- \_\_\_ 5. If the other person loses his/her train of thought, I offer assistance by restating the point.

## OBSERVER FORM

Instructions: Write the names of the individuals in your group in the spaces at the top of the chart. Read and become familiar with the behavior descriptions. Put a check in the appropriate block each time you observe the behavior. If possible, record verbatim examples.

<b>Description of Behavior</b>					<b>Comments</b>
Asking for clarification or repetition					
Focusing attention					
Being supportive					
Body movement					
Body posture					
Checking perception					
Facial expression					
Focusing attention					
Injecting humour					
Leading the discussion					
Making eye contact					
Paraphrasing					
Respecting					
Derailing					
Summarizing					
Trusting					
Teaching					
Sparring					
Dominating					
Judging					
Blocking the discussion					

Source: Adapted from Don Harvey and Donald R. Brown, *An Experiential Approach to Organization Development*, Prentice Hall, 1996. (With thanks to Karen Breidert and Patty Warren of SAI)

## Communication Self-Evaluation

A communication skill that I already use well is \_\_\_\_\_.

A communication skill that I'd like to improve on is \_\_\_\_\_.

Within the chorus setting, I notice the following communication skills being used:

Within the chorus setting, I'd like to see improvement on the following communication skills:

When someone is communicating in front of the chorus or the region, I appreciate it when they \_\_\_\_\_.

When I'm up in front of the chorus or the region, I'd like to improve the way I

\_\_\_\_\_.