

Listening

It is rare to find a good “listener.” If you’ve ever had the experience of being heard – listened to – and truly understood, you know it’s an awesome experience.

When you truly listen it means that you simply absorb what the speaker is saying with no intentions other than to understand that person. When you listen you may ask questions like “Can you explain that further?” or you may say “Let me make sure I understand you. You’re saying that . . . , am I hearing you correctly?” A good listener doesn’t judge, they don’t give opinions, and they don’t give advice. They just . . . listen – with the intent to understand. Try it sometime!

But to listen well, you’ll want to be mindful of these listening blocks:

- 1. Mind reading.** Assuming you know what the other person feels and thinks without asking.
- 2. Listening to respond.** Planning what you want to say next and missing what’s being said now.
- 3. Filtering.** Listening only to things that are relevant to you and ignoring the rest (even if it’s important to the other person).
- 4. Judging.** Evaluating the other person and what they say rather than really trying to understand how they see the world.
- 5. Daydreaming.** Getting caught in memories or fantasies while someone is talking to you.
- 6. Advising.** Looking for suggestions and solutions instead of listening and understanding.
- 7. Sparring.** Invalidating the other person by arguing and debating.
- 8. Being right.** Resisting or ignoring any communication that suggests you are wrong or should change.
- 9. Derailing.** Flat out changing the subject as soon as you hear anything that bothers or threatens you.
- 10. Placating.** Agreeing too quickly (“I know . . .you’re right...I’m sorry”) without really listening to the other person’s feelings or concerns.

Being a good listener can completely change relationships, and can be especially valuable in conflict situations. It opens the door to communication and understanding. Give it a try!