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FAMILY DYNAMICS



How to Be a Good Listener

Good listeners share several key characteristics: They give their full attention to those who are speaking; they reserve judgment until they have fully understood what the other person is saying; and they think carefully before responding. These communication skills help build [rapport and trust](#)¹. Sometimes referred to as active listening, good listening is a character trait that is also an important [leadership](#)² skill.

To improve your listening skills, experiment with these techniques:

Remove distractions

Eliminate distractions that might keep you from giving someone your full attention. If you find yourself frequently saying “Mm-hmm,” “Yeah,” “Uh-huh” on phone calls, chances are you are not fully engaged in listening. When you are distracted by incoming calls, texts, or emails, it is next to impossible to be a good listener. Pay attention to how you respond in order to assess your listening skills.

Avoid interrupting

Fight the urge to interrupt or talk over someone while they are speaking. As tempting as it may be to interject your wisdom, it can damage the relationship and lead to future strained conversations.

Make eye contact

Making eye contact shows the person speaking that you are really listening. This demonstrates that your attention is focused on them and that you believe they are important.

Paraphrase

In your own words, repeat back what you heard the other person say to show you are listening. This technique improves overall communication because it ensures you have received the message correctly. Just be sure not to overdo it. There is a fine line between paraphrasing and parroting. An example of a paraphrase might be, “What I think I heard you say is...”

Ask questions

If you did not understand something or need more clarity on what is being said, ask questions. Asking for clarification indicates to the other person that you are actively considering what they have said. Questions can also be used to avoid arguments, especially if there is an emotional charge to the dialogue. Questions like “What do you need my help with?” or “What do you think needs to happen next?” can be helpful when a resolution is needed. It also gives you more time to think before you respond.



1. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/become-a-better-listener-active-listening/>
2. <https://hbr.org/2016/05/listening-is-an-overlooked-leadership-tool>