

LESSON-13

Listening in Public speaking

Why to listen

Listening is important not only because it is the other side of the speaking process and the communication is not completed without Listening on the part of the audience. This section will help you in judging the role of listening in a public speaking situation which in turn will help in assessing whether your audience is in a position to listen to you well, whether you can do something to improve listening and how to listen to the feed back they give you.

Public Speaking Is Tuned to Listeners.

Public speakers must be aware of the reactions of listeners, and make both on-the-spot and carefully planned adjustments to their reactions. As you develop basic conversation skills, you learn how listeners react. Smiles and frowns, nodding heads! looks of bore-dom or confusion all are meaningful in conversations. The technical term for these reactions is feedback. Feedback is absolutely vital to a public speaker. Smiles and nods of agreement can raise your confidence and let you know that you are getting through to listeners. On the other hand, frowns or signs of confusion or disagreement should prompt you to rephrase or present more evidence that what you say is true. Imagine you were giving a speech about global warming, and some members of the audience looked angry or perplexed. You might add, as you monitor such negative signals:

I know it may be hard to accept the conclusion that we are responsible for global warming. But Dr. Tom Wigley, a climatologic at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, recently said in an interview with the *New York Times*: "I think the scientific justification for the statement is there, unequivocally." And Dr. Michael Oppenheimer, an atmospheric scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund, added: "The scientific community has discovered the smoking gun."

For our own sakes, the sake of our children, and the sake of the hu-man future, we'd better start believing it and asking what we can do about it.

A wise speaker always has additional facts, figures, and expert opinions in reserve for such moments.

In addition to such impromptu adjustments, your entire speech should be designed to answer the questions that audiences - knowingly or un-knowingly - will ask:

- Why should I be interested in your topic?
- What do you mean?
- How do I know that is true?
- What can I do about it?

You must answer “Why should I be interested?” in the introduction of your speech or you will lose your audience before you ever get started. “What do you mean?” suggests that your purpose and language must be clear and understandable. For example, if you said, “A pattern of climatic response to human activities is identifiable in the climatologically record,” listeners might well respond with, “Huh?” “How do I know that is true?” conveys the natural skepticism of listeners to startling information or conclusions. This question calls for evidence, like that offered above on global warming. “What can I do about it?” comes up in persuasive speeches. It challenges speakers to present a course of action that seems both practical and promising. If you can successfully answer these questions, the re-sponse to your speech may be more than immediate feedback: the lives of listeners may be enriched in some lasting way. Your speech and you will have made a difference.

It seems clear from this discussion that public speaking - far from be-ing a mysterious skill - is a natural, but expanded, application of abilities and sensitivities we develop as we learn how to, converse with one another. On the other hand, as we move from three to six, six to twelve, and twelve to twenty-four listeners, there are some striking changes in the patterns of communication that we must also understand.

Communication is a composite of speaking and listening. Honing skills in both these areas is absolutely essential if the communicator wishes to impress the receiver. The initial impact is made by the speaking abilities of the sender. Equally important is the ability to listen carefully. If the overall effectiveness of these two components is considered, it would be seen that the ability to listen rather than to speak fluently impresses more.

The two activities, viz., speaking and listening, cannot be segregated. Both are closely intertwined ‘and an overall impact is created if both these skills are used effectively. Let us ‘use the word “Impress as an acronym to understand the basic features of communication or concept which, if once understood, would definitely help us to impress the other interact ant Idea. The first step in the process of communication is to decide on the idea which needs to be communicated. There may be a host of ideas passing through the mind of the sender. Depending upon the situation and the receiver, the speaker selects the idea best suited to the occasion.

M - Message. Once the idea has been selected, it needs to be clothed in a language that is comprehensible to the receiver. The encoding of the message has to be done keeping a number of factors in mind. What is it that needs to be stated? What is the language that is going to be understood by the receiver? Does the idea necessarily pertain to the interests of the receiver? What is it that the receiver actually needs to know? Framing of the message, if done (keeping answers to these questions in mind), would definitely make an impact on the receiver.

P – Pause Paragraphs. The significance of pauses cannot be underestimated. Pauses should be juxtaposed at just the right minute so that the receiver can assimilate the impact of the message. The use of pauses would be best understood in the context of a presentation. The presenter should, at the time of making a presentation, use this device suitably. Excessive usage of this device can lead the presentation into being one that is

pretty boring and monotonous. The right use of pauses actually stimulates the audience. The impact is often so great and forceful that the receivers actually lean forward in their chairs when the presenter pauses, as if urging him to resume the presentation. This device, in the course of the interaction, lasts for barely a few seconds. However, the impact is long and meaningful. In written communication pauses get translated into paragraphs. If the decision to use a certain number of paragraphs is right and the division of points in these paragraphs is also correct then written communication becomes meaningful and creates a positive impression.

R - Receiver. The receiver is the most important person in the process of communication who could, if he so desires, also prove to be the most difficult. He is the one who is generally led into the interaction. In order to draw his attention, it is imperative that there be an extra plus that would retain his interest and make him attentive to the ensuing communication. To satisfy this criterion the sender should address himself to the needs and expectations of the receiver. Formulating the statements according to a mutually accepted goal is a good way of proceeding and drawing his attention.

E - Empathy. In communication empathy should be used to help us understand the other individual, the strategies that 'he' adopts and the responses that he gives at a particular moment. It would be worthwhile to note that all communication is situation bound. The same individual in two different situations might use the same words but his intention might be totally different. Gauging the exact meaning of an utterance can only be done when we literally put ourselves in the shoes of the other person and try to understand the situation from the perspective of the sender.

Each individual, as a sender has, what we refer to as, a 'logic bubble' that enables him to formulate his message in a particular fashion. The same holds true for the receiver or the listener. The greater the empathy between them the higher the level of understanding and more the receptivity to messages and ideas. Empathy needs to be distinguished from another word, namely, "sympathy", which is different in connotation. Sympathy is placing the sender on a higher pedestal and viewing the other in a sympathetic light.

S - Sender. The communication process hinges on the sender. He initiates the interaction and comes up with ideas and concepts that he wishes to share with the receiver. His role is the most crucial. The success or failure of interaction depends on him and on the strategies he adopts to get his message across by securing the attention of the receiver. A cautious sender would understand that there is a difference between the mental frames of the interactants. Such a difference could be a result of discrepancy in interpretation of words, perception of reality, and attitudes, opinions and emotions. Message, if formulated, with awareness along these areas, is sure to bring success to the sender.

S - Security check. Effective communication necessitates that the receiver listens carefully to the utterances of the sender so that the end results are positive. The primary rule is: never be in a rush to commence communication. Sufficient time and effort should be put in formulating the message. Suppose the sender wishes to communicate five points. The sequencing and necessary substantiation of points with facts and figures should be done prior to the actual beginning of the communication process. This would build confidence in the

message and eliminate possibility of errors in the statements. To sum up, the sender, in order to impress the receiver should, at the start, have an idea encoded in the form of a message. At the time of encoding, the sender does a thorough security check to ascertain that all points have been dealt with in a desired order. The message is then transmitted to the receiver with the require voice articulations and pauses so as to heighten the impact. Finally, the response of the receiver should be viewed empathetically. Once all these factors have been understood, it proves easy to prevail upon the receiver.

There could, however, be comments when, in spite of efforts being made to make the interaction informative and meaningful, all communication links fall apart and the process ends in a meaningless rumble of words and sounds. This disturbing or “distracting factor is what we refer to as Noise. This may be on the part of the sender or the receiver; it can be voluntary or involuntary.

Role of Speaker and Audience

The following gives you an understanding about the different rules that apply in your role as a “speaker” and as an “audience”:

You as Speaker You as Audience

You must have some- thing to say or speak. Your main role is that of an attentive listener with the ability to sit upright and look in the direction of the speaker for the entire duration of the presentation.

You stand or sit alone generally on a raised platform. You as audience sit together in a group.

You have no choice but to continue performing till either you have completed your topic or your allotted time is over. You have the option to turn to a neighbour and make a comment, glance at a news- paper, look at the ceiling, close your eyes for a moment, take a nap, show boredom, get up and leave, indicate a lack of interest, or take out a book and hold it to your face. Besides, as an audience you mayor may not listen.

Skills you need, to minimize effect of anxiety and fear To be an effective speaker in public, you need to have a variety of both mental and physical performance skills, which are different from your social conversational skills. These are:

- Concentration,
- Coordination, and
- Quick response.

BETTER LISTENING

Listening to details can be very important when trying to solve a problem or when attempting to follow complicated directions. Sometimes the details are not essential but at other times these details are the most important part of the information being conveyed.

Being able to listen carefully to what is said and to all the words that a person is saying isn't an easy task. Sometimes we must listen with our eyes and observe body language, facial expressions, and eye movement in order to get all the information needed. The

better you “listen” to the details, the more you will hear and the better you will understand what is being said.

. Objective

To use good listening skills in order to win the game.

Material Required

- . Paper
- . Pens or pencils
- . 2 Chairs

Description

Prior to this activity make up a dozen or so sentences that are complete and correct but make them crazy and random; then write each sentence on a small piece of paper. Some examples of crazy sentences are as under

- . “My Mother had a large tattoo on her forehead.
- . “Big Bird is my idol”.
- . “The blue cow swam over the moon”.
- . “It is good to eat spiders and caterpillars for breakfast.”
- “Rubber bands stick to the ceiling on Christmas day.”
- “I and my donkey loves to drink Coke”
- “Cold gets hot when the going gets tough”

Be creative and come up with many more. Also, prior to the game set up two chairs in the front of the room.

For the activity select two people from the group and ask them to sit in the chairs that you have set up in the front of the room. Give each person a piece of paper with one of the crazy sentences on it. The two players must read the sentence to themselves and then engage in conversation.

The objective of those two is to slip in the sentence without the other person guessing what it is. You can give them a topic to start with such as fishing, classical music, cricket, shopping, or anything else that has nothing to do with the sentences. Also give them a one or two minute time limit to slip their sentences in during the conversation. Ask the audience to listen carefully.

After the time limit, allow the people in the audience to guess what the crazy sentence is and whoever guesses correctly is given the opportunity to play the game for the next round.

Discussion Issues

1. What did you have to do in order to detect .the hidden sentence?
2. When do you use your best listening skills? Why?

When is it important for you to show good listening skills?

WHY EOPLE ARE POOR LISTENERS

Some studies on communication indicate that 75 per cent or more of communications are verbal both of speaking and listening, and only 25 per cent are written both writing and reading. On the other hand, only 15 per cent of the information retained in our memories is received through our ears. The other 85 per cent is received through the eyes from the written words, or from the things we see. It is , however, a difficult task to measure precisely.

Studies also reveal that the time spent on communication activities by an average person is broken down as follows:

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Listening | 45 per cent |
| Speaking | 30 per cent |
| Reading | 16 per cent |
| Writing | 9 per cent |

These figures show that people engage in a wide variety of occupation spent more time in listening to other people. Thus the importance of listening has been greatly and widely recognized in recent years, particularly by those people who are involved in public relations, and a wide variety of occupations day in and day out. In educational institutions, emphasis is given more to training in the skills of writing. This is followed by reading and speaking. The least training they receive is on how to be an effective listener.

Despite the great time one spends in listening, the average person does not listen carefully.

In several of the large companies, considerable weightage is given to a person's skill and ability to listen attentively before he is recruited for a job. The reason: an important responsibility of workers and officers in a business is to listen carefully and intelligently to those with whom they interact. Each day many hours are spent in listening to the instructions of the seniors, customer's orders, views and problems of the staff, discussions on duties and functions and other business-related matters. Better and effective listening habits do contribute towards enhancing chances of business success. A "high listening index" gets you a better rating for securing a job in the US and West European Countries. Training and practice can help improve listening skills.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEARING AND LISTENING

Many people take it for granted that they are effective listeners. One must make a distinction between listening and hearing. Often most people get confused with picking up sound vibrations, whereas listening is concerned with making a sense or meaning out of what people hear. On the other hand hearing is physical and listening is a mental process. The basic principle of effective listening is that unless the listener pays attention, has concentration, and is seriously concerned with the subject, interpreting and remembering the sound stimuli, he cannot understand the message of the speech.

Listening is the use of hearing when one is listening, it does not mean just hearing. It is a process of understanding of what is heard. Listening skills require the use of ears, brain,

eyes to understand non-verbal cues, with such additional insights like perception, attitudes, participation etc. Listening is with the mind and hearing is with the ears.

Thus there is a clear distinction between hearing and the listening process. A speech is meant to be heard by the listeners instantly and clearly, as such it should be in a style to catch the ears and the eyes. Hearing is passive, while listening is active. Hearing involves just receiving sound signals or the message in the ears, but listening involves not just receiving stimuli into the ears but into the conscious thought, which requires efforts on the part of the listeners. So listening is a process of making evaluation and judgment of the thought, while hearing is only a simple reception of sound.

Ineffective listening comes from hearing only with the ears, and effective listening comes from listening only with the mind and not with the ears. Listening is more than hearing, but there can be no effective listening without hearing. Hence effective listening is a coin with two faces, one is hearing and another is listening.

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD LISTENING

- I. *Listen Patiently*: The speaker is entitled to be heard, even if you feel his approach is wrong. A guide to the listener is to indicate simple acceptance by nodding, lighting your pipe or, perhaps interjecting an occasional 'um-hm' or 'I See.'
2. *Understanding Speaker's Feeling*: Better to understand the feelings of the speaker expressing his impulses. It is also equally necessary to understand his intellectual account. Effective listening demands careful attention because most of the people have difficulty in talking clearly about their feelings.
3. *Restatement and Summary*: Restate the person's feeling, briefly but accurately. At this stage, you simply serve as a mirror and encourage the other person to continue talking. Occasionally, make summary responses such as "you think you are in a dead end of job, or you feel the manager is playing the favorites", but in doing so, keep your tone neutral and try not to lead the person to your pet conclusions.
4. *Time for Discussion*: It is a good principle to allow time for discussion to continue without interruption. It is also advisable to separate the conversation from mere official communication. In other words, do not make the conversation any more authoritative.
5. *Common Cliches*: Try to listen for what is not said - evasions for pertinent or perhaps too-ready agreement with common cliches. The omission of this type may be a clue to gather some more facts from the person.
6. *Avoid Expressing Views*: The sound principle -for effective listening -try to limit the expression of your views because these may encourage or repress what the other person says.
7. *Less Explanation*: In effective communication, better results can be achieved by giving less emphasis to explaining and more emphasis to listening.
8. *Rapport*: It is a good principle to establish good rapport with the sender.

TYPES OF LISTENING

1. *Marginal Listening*: A listener has the capacity to listen four times faster than someone can talk. So the listener can use the extra time available to think about other matters than the subject matter given by the speaker. This is known as marginal listening.

2. *Evaluating Listening*: A listener while listening to a message, spares his time and thinks to judge and evaluate what is said by the speaker, and sometimes, form rebuttals to it. Evaluation of listening does not permit the submission of two opposing ideas.
3. *Projective Listening*: Projective listening is more commonly used in committee meetings and other types of group -communication. It is a process to observe and understand what is said and to assimilate the viewpoint of the speaker. Listeners have to fully grasp the message and the emotional contents of the ideas. In this listening process, judgment-making is not an important aspect but an attempt is made to grasp the message before contradiction or further ideas. Listening to this type is more useful in solving complex problems and in using participative leadership tools.
4. *Active Listening*: Also called “empathic listening.” Every effective listening is effective .or active which will be decided when the receiver understands the message or the subject of communication in the same sense and intention of the sender. It is a very difficult task to become an active listener unless one practices. Listening for feeling content is called active or empathic listening.¹⁸ Myers and Myers state that active listening consists of listening to a person without passing judgment on what is being said, and to mirror back what has been said to indicate that you understood what feelings that speaker was putting across”.¹⁹
5. *Passive Listening*: In the case of passive listening, the listener just absorbs the information given like hearing a tape recorder.
6. *Deliberate Listening*: A listening is said to be deliberate when it is intended to comprehend the content of the message and to understand the feeling and context in which the communication is taking place. ²⁰
7. *Fake Listening*: Many listeners mistake silence for listening. They develop the habit of faking attention. They steadfastly fix their eyes on the speaker and try to project themselves as good listeners. They usually miss many important points made by the speaker.
8. *Listening by Observation*: It is a systematic and deliberate study through the eyes of spontaneous occurrence of feelings and actions of the speaker while talking. The aim of observational listening is to draw meanings from non-verbal cues. The listener observes carefully the facial expressions of the speaker, gestures, body language, nod, smile, and other mannerisms. It includes observation of punctuations like speaker’s pattern of breath, sound, pause, cliches, etc. On observation, one may perceive stimuli as they are exhibited by the speaker.

TYPES OF LISTENER OR AUDIENCE

The authors like Elizabeth Andersch, Lorin Staats and Robert Bostrom in their works portray eight easily identifiable categories of listeners. They are quite a cast of characters and there are many more types of listeners. Better if a speaker knows them and understands them.

1. The sleeper:
 - (a) He seeks a restful haven in a relatively quiet hall.
 - (b) He has no intention of listening.
 - (c) He is irritated if there are disturbances.
 - (d) His eyes are closed as he sits, or rather reclines in his seat.
 - (e) His blissful repose is reflected in his face.

(2) *Eager Beaver:*

- (a) He keeps smiling and nodding.
- (b) His eyes have a strange, slightly out-of-focus appearance.
- (c) His energies are directed to impress the speaker with what a good listener he is - a real waste.
- (d) The same energy if properly channelised, could result in effective listening.

(3) *The Tiger:*

- (a) He is ready to pounce on everything the speaker says.
- (b) He is occupied with looking for trouble.
- (c) One can see it in his crouching position, leaning forward, eyes flashing with alertness of a big cat.
- (d) He silently snarls as he hears his first bone of contention.

(4) *The shy, Bewildered:*

- (a) He has never quite found out what the lecture is all about.
- (b) Pained, quizzical glances from him are a constant reminder to the speaker that he must go slowly, repeating and reinforcing important information.

(5) *The Frowner:*

- (a) His forehead has a perpetual furrow.
- (b) He seems always on the average of a question.
- (c) His expression is an accurate reflection of his state of mind, but often it is a façade of attention.

(6) *The relaxed:*

- (a) He seems to stay awake, but slips down in his chair, rests his head on the back of it.
- (b) He stares fixedly at some object or person.
- (c) There is little tension in him.
- (d) There are no visible means of reading him.
- (e) He never seems to react to anything that is said, either negatively or positively.
- (f) He is a real problem for the speaker.

(7) *Busybee:*

- (a) he listens and impresses by writing letter, 'buzzing' with neighbors, sneaking glances at magazines, cleaning fingernails, combing hair and so on.
- (b) He is not a listener in the true sense but is a potential auditor in a captive audience.
- (c) He will motivate the speaker causing him to try various devices to capture his attention.

(8) *Two-eared Listener:*

- (a) He listens with his ears and mind.
- (b) He actively participates.
- (c) He reacts objectively.
- (d) He decodes and evaluates carefully.
- (e) He is a model which all of us should follow.
- (f) His eagerness is reflected in his body tension, standing or sitting postures.
- (g) His face reflects agreement or disagreement, interest, question, approval and other attitudes resulting from thoughtful, objective consideration of messages.

Listening Process

Like communication, listening as one of the elements of communication, is also a process. Because it has some elements, such as:

- (1) awareness.
- (2) reception.
- (3) perception.

Listening is an activity and every active listener and every passive listener is consciously or unconsciously involved. The following is a brief description of these three elements.

- I. *Awareness*: Awareness stage of listening involves getting the attention of the audience so that they will listen. It is the responsibility of the speaker in part to draw the attention of the listeners. L. Brown states that “this responsibility involves using, when appropriate, unexpected stimuli; which will arouse curiosity and expected stimuli which will get agreement.”²¹

Lee Thayer developed five basic principles for making people aware so that they will listen. They are:

- (1) People will attend to those events (stimuli), external to themselves, which they assume might have some relevance to their personal goals and objectives, immediate or long-range.
- (2) People will attend to those external or internal events which serve the unconscious. metabolic needs or “appetites” of the conceptual evaluating system itself.
- (3) People will therefore, attend to those things which they can, but unattend to those things which are contrary or non-conforming in some way to their own model of the world or of their expectations about the future.
- (4) People will attend to the unexpected. This is perhaps one of the few aspects of human and organizational communication for which Information Theory, as such, has relevance.
- (5) Finally the relationship which exists between an individual and some object, event, idea or person in his environment will play some part in determining the attention he pays to it (or to the other person)

Effective listening insists on what one perceives and corresponding responses resulting from perceiving. Some people suggested a communication diary to improve awareness.

Why Should One Listen to You ?

If we are to improve our communication, we must try to learn what it is that makes the person with whom we wish to communicate, listen, if you want to tell him something, he will listen only if what you say interests him, is relevant to him and means something to him.

This is the basic premise of any communication activity: “What is in it for the listener?” It is absolutely no use making a statement or a speech or writing a notice or even a hook if you do not take notice of what is in it for the listener or the reader.

What one wants to say is not important. What he wants to hear is all important. If you want some action to result from your communication, if you want the recipient to do something, then communication will stimulate the desired action only if it is couched in a language which can be understood and which give some benefit or satisfaction. If it does not take note of these two simple factors, then the communication will fail.

Make the Recipient Understand it was Important to Him

It is no good blaming the other man if he does not understand your message. The onus is on you to make sure that he does understand.

Managers talking to workers, trade union leaders, management, politician talking to voters, journalists talking to readers, trying to communicate with the rest of us, and advertisers talking to customers, it is up to the speaker to make sure that the listener understands, accepts and perceives the importance of the message.

We must, therefore, base our speech not only on what we have to say but on what the listener wants to hear. We must try to learn not to show how clever we are by using words that the other man does not understand, he just switches off, he does not bother to listen. A void jargon, abbreviations or complex technical phrases.

ERRORS IMPEEDING UNDERSTANDING

A study of Campbell reveals the following *sources* of systematic errors which impede understanding:

- (1) *Length of the Message*: The length of the message would result either in loss or retaining of message. Necessarily, the listeners tend to shorten, simplify and eliminate the details of what they listen to a message. Consequently, it may produce a loss of information and accuracy. The longer the message, the greater the loss.
- (2) *Middle of the Message*: Listeners tend to be the best/the first or last part of the message. Usually, the middle of the message is least remembered.
- (3) *Round off*: Listeners are good tailors who frequently tend to tailor messages according to their own need, requirement or beliefs. Listeners tend to make message perception. The systematic error of round-off as a message often distorts the true content and meaning of the message.
- (4) *Fast Haunting Imperfectly Transmitted Messages*: Generally listeners will perceive all unclear or ambiguous messages either in terms of positiveness or negativeness. If the message has positive things in the past, it will also be perceived to be positive. If the source has said usually negatively on the topic, the message will be judged negative as well.
- (5) *Reductive Nature of Listening*: As observed in the above point, the past message affects listeners' perception in the positiveness or negativeness. So they allow previously expressed ideas to color their interpretations. Once listeners heard what the speaker has had to say before, they know what the speaker says now. Thus they are now in reductive nature of listening or simply does not listen.
- (6) *Hearing What One Expects to Hear*: Listeners always tend to hear what they expect to bear. In this situation, the listeners rather than ceasing to listen, continue listening, but this error distorts the message received.

- (7) *You Agree With Me*: The listeners, particularly when confronted with an admired or repeated source, often modifies the message so that it more closely coincides with her or his attitudes or beliefs.
- (8) *Black and White Listening*: The listeners in the process of listening tend to polarize the words, seeing things as either good or bad, right or wrong, 'beautiful' or ugly, and to evaluate the message in terms of these extremes.
- (9) *Filtered Listening*: "Often we tend to filter the message through the attitudes held by the groups with which we identify. We let the group members tell us what to think or how to interpret the message rather than relying first upon our intelligence.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is a fine art; and everyone should develop effective active listening skills. The success of effective listening depends on the talk worth listening. This is crucial to good oral communication. Delivering a listenable talk will command and hold an audience's attentive listening. This paragraph deals in brief with the subject which is almost the sole content of some listening course, how to develop effective-active listening skills. The useful hints given below help how to make one hear, listen and understood by all the listeners in a lecture or meeting room. Common guides and practice drills are covered for improving communication skills; The following guidelines are the techniques to overcome poor listening habits and to accomplish an effective listening and improved listening.

- (1) *Eye Contact*: When one of the audience does not look at the speaker, it means, he is not interested in listening. A listener must exhibit a behavior of making eye contact. It encourages the speaker.
- (2) *Bodily Exhibitions*: A listener must show himself that he is interested in listening. Non-verbal signs-can be used to exhibit affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions, eye contact etc., convey certain things to the speaker.
- (3) *Avoid Distracting Actions or Gestures*: A voiding actions, mental presence etc. are some other measures of exhibiting interest in listening. Looking at one's own watch, shuffle papers, playing with pencil, reading newspaper or letters, and other distracting activities should not be practiced.
- (4) *Ask Questions*: An effective listener always asks questions, clarifies doubts, seeks explanations, and ensures clear understanding. This makes the speaker realize that he is really listening.
- (5) *Paraphrase*: Restating in one's own words what the speaker is said is called paraphrasing, for instance, "Do you mean", "What I hear you saying is" etc. There are two important reasons for paraphrasing or restating the same what the-speaker has said. Firstly, unless one is listening carefully and attentively, he cannot paraphrase, So it acts as a check or control over listening. Secondly, it ensures accuracy.
- (6) *A void Interpreting Speaker*: Good listeners interpret the speaker after completing his speech.
- (7) *Do Not Overtake*: Some people instead of listening 'to the speaker "till he completes his version", speak their own ideas or points. Listening is the price one has to pay to get the people talk. An effective listener will never overtake the speaker. One cannot talk and listen at the same time.

- (8) *Put the Speaker at Ease*: By your attitude, help the speaker become relaxed and aware of a willing listener. Be not only seen to listen, but felt to listen. And use eye contact.
- (9) *Listen Patiently*: The speaker is entitled to be heard, even if you feel his approach is wrong.
- (10) *Avoid Premature Arguments*: Don't interrupt to question or argue about facts. "That's not so..." "prove it..." and other such interjections only serve to abort the discussion.
- (11) *Stay Objective*: Try to avoid emotional involvement; simply try to understand the feeling, or the 'point of view' of the speaker. Do your evaluation later.
- (12) *Avoid Mental Rebuttals*: Too much time is spent mentally preparing a rebuttal or counter argument, instead of listening. Let the speaker finish before you reach a decision.
- (13) *Remove Distractions*: Don't doodle or play with papers, pencils or anything else. What about shutting a door or window to eliminate extraneous sound, or turning off the radio?
- (14) *Indicate Acceptance*: An occasional 'yes' or 'I see' or even a nod of the head indicates attention. It can also acknowledge what is being said (not necessarily agreement).
- (15) *Hold your Temper*: An angry person almost inevitably gets wrong meanings from words. Anyway, any fool can lose his/her temper. It takes a real person to keep it.
- (16) *Respect Pauses or Silence*: It is all too common for us to "jump in" when the speaker pauses. Silence is an embarrassment for too many people. -Don't fall victim to this fault.
- (17) *Redirect a Direct Question*: With few exceptions, this helps a great deal. If the speaker asks, for example, "what do you think I should do?" the reply might be "what do you 'think you should do?" Be on guard against too much of this. That might be frustrating. It is always better to avoid direct questions and arguments about facts. It is advisable to refrain from saying, "that just is not so", "hold on a minute," "let's look at the facts review" or "prove it." You may want to review evidence later but it is irrelevant to how the person feels now.
- (18) *Be Honest with Answer*: When faced with a genuine request for your opinion, give it honestly (if you have enough information to do so).
- (19) *Listen between the Lines*: What is not said is not important. Be alert to this: attitudes, moods, feelings often convey far more than words. It calls for a strong feeling of empathy on the part of the listener. Try to find the right "wave length."
- (20) *Listening Habits*: One should be aware of listening habits. Emotions often affect our listening ability. Introspection will tell you that if a speaker says something you like, you hear everything. If the speaker says something to which we are opposed, we become different. Listen and understand the viewpoint of those you disagree with.
- (21) *Listening a Personal Risk*. Active listening involves personal risk. If you hear the person out, you risk being changed yourself. Momentarily, you set aside your beliefs and see the world as he sees it. Have the courage to risk your opinions by listening actively to an opposing point of view. Have an open mind.
- (22) *Listen to Total Meaning*: Listen to the total meaning of the message being communicated. Don't assume and don't pass judgment quickly.

- (23) *Observe Non-verbal Cues*: Search out the main points. Observe the non-verbal cues like tone pitch, physical gesture, etc., which too convey meaning to the message. A listener may note them down as these will help in revealing if the speaker appears to be sincere in his views.
- (24) *A void Fake Attention*: Many listeners mistake silence for listening. They develop the habit of faking attention. They steadfastly fix their eyes on the speaker and try to project themselves as good listeners. They usually miss out many important points made by the speaker.
- (25) *No Personal Bias*: It is always desirable to drop personal biases and attitudes about a speaker and his views. Listeners often prematurely dismiss lectures as uninteresting. They assume so and let their mind wander.

INSIGHTS INTO LISTENING

In addition to the various guidelines and suggestions offered above, the following are the additional insights which should be followed for effective listening:

- (1) *Monopolizing Speech*: People who continuously speak interrupt effective listening. They obstruct valuable feedback and exchange of information. When everyone talks, none listens but a few hear.
- (2) *Attitude*: Everyone should develop an active and effective listening attitude. It is this attitude that affects one's listening.
- (3) *Attention*: It is suggested to focus attention upon the oral message and the speaker.
- (4) *Response to Questions*: Sometimes, listeners may confront to give answers to questions. It is advisable for effective listening to respond with pertinent and relevant questions or comments concerning the data and their intended interpretation.
- (5) *Rapport*: Effective listening requires to reinforce rapport by listeners' own behavior. Listening postures, facial expressions, and gestures are parts of feedback languages.
- (6) *Participation*: One can develop listening attitude by active participation in the communication event. If the listeners are inactive in participation, the less informative listening is likely to be. Activeness can be reinforced by responding verbally or in writing or with silence.

On developing one's listening attitude, the listener will become aware of these communication insights also. They are:

- (1) Effective listening to data and to the style of presentation acquaints you with interests, needs and values of your associates or customers.
- (2) Effective listening provides cues to personalities, biases, abilities and resources.
- (3) Effective listening thereby enables you to deal more profitably with co-workers, with customers, and with competitors than you might otherwise do.²⁷

It is by appreciating the limits of the listener's perception that communication can be improved:

- He sees what he wants to see.
- He hears what he wants to hear.
- He does what he wants to do.

What he sees, what he hears and what he does are limited by his degree of perception, by his experience, his educational background, his environmental background and his way of life.

Gaining listener's empathy

- Slow down and give your listeners more information about what you are experiencing by using a wide range of "I-statements." You are likely to get more of your listener's empathy if you express more of what you are seeing and hearing, feeling, interpreting, wanting, and envisioning.

In the pages that follow we will explore each of these aspects of experience and how to express them more clearly.

Anytime one person sincerely listens to another, a very creative process is going on in which the listener mentally reconstructs the speaker's experience.

The more facets or dimensions of your experience you share with easy-to-grasp "I statements," the easier it will be for your conversation partner to reconstruct your experience accurately and understand what you are thinking, feeling and wanting. This is equally worthwhile whether you are trying to solve a problem with someone or trying to express appreciation for them. Expressing yourself this carefully might appear to take longer than your usual quick style of communication. But if you include all the time it takes to unscramble everyday misunderstandings, and to work through the feelings that usually accompany not being understood, expressing yourself more completely can actually take a lot less time.

Filling in the missing information. If you observe people in conversation carefully, you will begin to notice that human communication works by leaving many things unsaid and depending on the listener to fill in the missing but implied information. For example, a receptionist may say to a counselor, "Your two o'clock is here," a sentence which, on the face of it, makes no sense at all. She means "Your client who made an appointment for two o'clock has arrived in the waiting room," and the counselor knows that. It's amazing how much of the time this abbreviating and implying process works just fine. But, in situations of change, ambiguity, conflict, or great emotional need, our "shorthand" way of speaking may not work at all for at least three possible reasons.

First, our listeners may fill in a completely different set of details than the one we intended.

Second, our listeners may not understand the significance of what we are saying (they get only some of the details, so miss the big picture).

And finally, without actually intending to mislead anyone, we may leave out important parts of our experience that we find embarrassing or imagine will evoke a hostile reaction. The more serious the consequences of misunderstanding would be, the more we need to both understand our own experience better and help our listeners by giving them a more complete picture of our experience in language that does not attack them.

According to various communication researchers, there are five main dimensions of experience that your conversation partners can use to recreate your experience inside

their minds. The more elements you provide, the higher the probability that your listener's recreation will match your experience. In this Workbook I will refer to these elements or dimensions of experience as "the five messages."

- Examples in table format. The example in the table below outlines a five-part way of saying more of what we are experiencing. The shorthand version of the message below would be something like, "Stop that racing!" Here are the details of the five messages that are left out in the shorthand version: (Please read down the columns) The Five Messages express: Example (in a hospital, nurse to young patient): seeing, hearing...

1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only) "John, when I see you racing your wheelchair down the hall... and feeling... 2. What emotions are you feeling? ...I feel really upset...

because I... 3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipations of yours support those feelings? ...because I imagine that you are going to hurt yourself and someone else, too...

and now I want...

4. What action, information or commitment do you want now? ...so I want you to promise me right now that you will slow down...

so that... 5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats) ...so that you can get out of here in one piece and I can stop worrying about a collision." Note: My deep appreciation goes to the work of Marshall Rosenberg¹³ for helping me to understand Messages 1 through 4, to the work of Sharon and Gordon Bower¹⁴ for helping me understand Message 5, and to the work of John Grinder and Richard Bandler for helping my understand how people "delete" various aspects of their experience from their communication.¹⁵ For interesting variations on the theme of complete messages, see their books noted below.

In the table that starts below and continues on the next page you will find eight examples of statements that would give your listener a full range of information about your experience. Notice how a person's feelings can change according to the needs and interpretations they bring to a situation. (Please read across the rows) 1. When I saw/heard...

2. I felt... 3. because I... (need, want, interpret, associate, etc.) 4. and now I want (then I wanted)...

5. so that (in order to)...

When I saw the bear in the woods with her three cubs...

...I felt overjoyed!...

...because I needed a picture of bears for my wildlife class...

...and I wanted the bear to stand perfectly still...

so I could focus my camera.

When I saw the bear in the woods with her three cubs...

...I felt terrified!...

...because I remembered that bears with cubs are very aggressive...

...and I wanted to get out of there fast...
so that the bear would not pick up my scent.

- Reading 3-1: SAYING WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS Honest conversations viewed as counseling and counseling viewed as conversations that allow for honesty by Dennis Rivers, MA I wrote this essay for my students during a time when I was teaching a class on peer counseling. I was trying to describe in everyday language some of the good things that happen in counseling, that ALSO happen in friendship, good parenting, mentoring and ministering.

According to the psychotherapists Carl Rogers¹⁶ (in the 1960's), Margaret and Jordan Paul¹⁷ (in the 1980s) and Brad Blanton¹⁸ (in the 1990's), there is one main reason people suffer in their relationships with one another. And it's not best understood as some jargon about ids and egos and superegos. It's that we need to face more of the truth and tell more of the truth about what's happening in our lives, about how we feel, and about what we ourselves are doing.

Many people, probably most of us at some time or other, struggle to deal with troubling feelings and problem situations in life by using a whole range of avoidance maneuvers: we may pretend nothing is happening, focus on blaming others, or try to find ways of avoiding embarrassment, distracting ourselves and/or minimizing conflict. The problem with these ways of dealing with inner and outer conflicts is that they don't work well in the long run. If we try to deal with our problems by pretending that nothing is wrong, we run the risk of becoming numb or getting deeply confused about what we ¹⁶ Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1995.

¹⁷ Margaret and Jordan Paul, *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You*. Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers. 1983.

¹⁸ Brad Blanton, *How to Transform Your Life By Telling the Truth*. New York: Dell. 1996.

actually want and how we actually feel. And from tooth decay to auto repair to marriage, avoidance maneuvers won't protect us from the practical consequences of our difficulties.

Now what, you may ask, does this have to do with counseling? Well, a counselor is someone to whom you can tell the truth. And as you start to tell more of the truth to the counselor, you can start to admit the more of the truth to yourself, and rehearse compassionate ways of talking about it with others.

This is not an easy task. Early in life, according to Rogers, most of us discovered that if we said what we really felt and wanted, the big important people in our lives would get unhappy with us, (and, I would add, perhaps even slap us across the face). And since we needed their love and approval, we started being good little boys and good little girls and saying whatever would get us hugs, birthday presents, and chocolate cake. If we are lucky in life, our parents and teachers help us to learn how to recognize our own feelings and tell the truth about them in conciliatory ways. But this is a complex process, and more often, our parents and teachers didn't get much help on these issues themselves, so

they may not have been able to give us much help. As a result of this, many people arrive in adult life with a giant gap between what they actually feel and what the role they play says they are supposed to feel, and with no skills for closing that gap.

For example, as a child you were supposed to love your parents, right? But what if your dad came home drunk every night and hit your mom? How do you handle the gap between the fact that you're supposed to love your dad and the fact that you don't like him? These are the kinds of situations that bring people to counseling (or to the nightly six-pack of beer).

And life is full of them.

It all boils down to this: Life is tough and complex, ready or not. It is always tempting to try to get what you want (or to escape what you fear) by saying or doing whatever will avoid

- conflict, even if that means saying things you don't really mean, doing things you don't feel good about, or just blanking out. After you've been around for a while you start to realize that the cost of this kind of maneuvering is a heavy heart.

From what I've seen, there is no secret magic wand of psychotherapy that can instantly lighten a heart thus burdened. Psychotherapists are in the same human boat as the rest of us; they get depressed and divorced and commit suicide just like ordinary folks. You and the person you are trying to help are in the same human boat. There is no life without troubles.

Roofs leak. The people you love get sick and die. Our needs turn out to be in conflict with the needs of people we care about. The best made agreements come unglued. People fall out of love. And it is always tempting to pretend that everything is just fine. But I believe very strongly that we will all like ourselves a lot more if we choose the troubles that come from being more honest and more engaged, rather than the troubles that come from various forms of conflict avoidance and self-deception, such as "I'll feel better if I have another drink." or "What she doesn't know won't hurt her." etc.

Our truthful lives will probably not get any easier, but they will get a lot more satisfying.

Good counselors, psycho-therapists, mentors and friends, whatever their degree (or not), hold that knowledge for us, as we struggle to learn it and earn it. As adults there are many new possibilities open to us that were not available to us when we were children. We can learn to negotiate more of our conflicts, to confront more of our difficulties and to be honest about our feelings without being mean. So the fact is that we don't need to run away from our problems any more. What we need is to get in touch with ourselves and to learn new skills.

A counselor is someone who does not condemn you for your evasions, mistakes or lack of skill, and believes in your worth as a person, your capacity to tell the truth and your strength to bear the truth, no matter what you've done up to now. That's what makes counseling similar to being a priest, a rabbi, a minister or a really good friend. When we started pretending in order to please others at age three or four, that was the only way we could figure out how to get what we wanted. Now that we are adults we are capable of learning to tell the truth in conciliatory ways and we are capable of getting a lot more of what we want just by being courageous enough to ask for it. A good counselor, whether

that person is a peer counselor or a psychiatrist, is someone who invites us out of the role of maneuvering child and into the role of straightforward adult.

A counselor won't force you to tell the truth. It wouldn't be your truth if it were forced, it would just be one more thing you were saying to keep someone off your back. But a counselor is willing to hear how you actually feel. In this approach there are no bad feelings, there are only bad actions. It's OK to hate your drunken father; it's not OK to pick up a gun and shoot him. A big part of counseling is teaching people to make that distinction. In fact, the more people can acknowledge their feelings, the less they need to blindly act them out.

It's not the counselor's job to pull that stuff out of people; it's the counselor's job to be there to receive it and acknowledge it when it comes out in its own time. And to encourage the new skills and all the little moments of honesty that help a person toward a deeper truthfulness. There's a direct link between skill and awareness at work here. People are reluctant to acknowledge problems they feel they can't do anything about. As counseling conversations help a person to feel more confident about being able to talk things over and talk things out, a person may become more willing to face and confront conflicts and problems.

- As we realize that the counselor accepts us warts and all, clumsy coping maneuvers and all, we start to accept ourselves more. We are not angels and we are not devils. We are just ordinary human beings trying to figure how to get through life. There is a lot of trial and error along the way and that is nothing to be ashamed of. No one, absolutely no one, can learn to be human without making mistakes. But it is easy to imagine, when I am alone with my mistakes, that I am the stupidest, crummiest person in the world. A good counselor, (...friend, minister, parent, support group member) is someone who helps us develop a more realistic and forgiving picture of ourselves.

These relationships based on deep acceptance help to free us from the fantasy of being all-good or all-bad, help to free us from the need to keep up appearances. Thus, we can start to acknowledge and learn from whatever is going on inside us. Freed from the need to defend our mistakes, we can actually look at them, and get beyond the need to repeat them.

But these are hard things to learn alone. It really helps if someone accompanies us along that road.

Sometimes you will be the receiver of that acceptance and sometimes the giver. Whichever role you happen to play at a given moment, it's helpful to understand that honest, caring, empathic conversations (Carl Rogers' big three), just by themselves, set in motion a kind of deep learning that has come to be known as "healing." "Healing" is a beautiful word and a powerful metaphor for positive change. But "healing" can also be a misleading word because of the way it de-emphasizes learning and everyone's capacity to learn new ways of relating to people and navigating through life.

Here are five of the "deep learnings" that I see going on in almost all supportive and empathic conversations.

In paying attention to someone in a calm, accepting way, you teach that person to pay attention to themselves in just that way.

In caring for others, you teach them to care for themselves and you help them to feel more like caring about others.

The more you have faced and accepted your own feelings, the more you can be a supportive witness for another person who is struggling to face and accept his or her feelings.

In forgiving people for being human and making mistakes and having limits, you teach people to forgive themselves and start over, and you help them to have a more forgiving attitude toward others.

By having conversations that include the honest sharing and recognition of feelings, and the exploration of alternative possibilities of action, you help a person to see that, by gradual degrees, they can start to have more honest and fruitful conversations with the important people in their lives.

These experiences belong to everyone, since they are part of being human. They are ours to learn and, through the depth of our caring, honesty and empathy, ours to give. I believe they are the heart of counseling.

TEST YOURSELF

Are you an active listener or a poor listener? To find out, give yourself this test. As person strikes conversation with you, pose this question to yourself:

“Am I really listening or am I thinking of what I wish to say next?”

Get down to self-examination and analyze your mental process.

Are you,

“Acting polite and faking attention?”

“Interrupting frequently?”

“Straying from the speaker’s message?”

“Tuning out uninteresting subjects?”

“Drawing hasty conclusions?”

“Disapproving the speaker’s views?”

“Thinking of your work schedule for the remaining pan of the day?”

“Trying to put an end to the speaker’s chatter by day-dreaming?”

“Thinking of what you want to say?”

If your responses comprise many of the above, you Cannot be rated as an active listener. A random survey revealed that 85 percent of those asked to assess themselves as listeners rated themselves as average or worse. Fewer than five percent rated themselves as ‘excellent’ or ‘superior’.⁹

- Exercise for Challenge 3: Exploring the Five Messages. Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format.

Write one Five Messages statement a day in a journal or notebook. Here are some suggestions for expressing each of the Five Messages more clearly: The Five Messages:

Suggestions for expressing more clearly: 1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (facts only) A. Begin by stating what you actually see or hear rather than how you feel about it or what you think of it.

B. Describe specific actions observed, avoid generalizing such as “you always...” or “you never...” C. Be specific about place, time, color, texture, position and how often.

D. Describe rather than diagnose. Avoid words that label or judge the actions you observe such as “slimy,” “lousy,” “neurotic,” etc..

E. Avoid descriptions of a situation that imply emotions without actually stating them, such as “totally disgusting” and “horrible.” State your feelings explicitly in Message 2 (described next).

For example: “When I saw the big coffee stain on the rug...” is easier to hear and understand than “When you ruined my day, as always, with your slimy, stinking, totally disgusting, rotten antics...” 2. What emotions are you feeling? A. Use specific emotion describers such as “I feel...”: glad, angry, delighted, sad, afraid, resentful, embarrassed, calm, enthusiastic, fearful, manic, depressed, happy, etc.

B. Avoid feeling words that imply the action of another person: “I feel..., ignored, manipulated, mistreated, neglected, rejected, dominated, abandoned, used, cheated (etc.)” Notice how these words indirectly blame the listener for the speaker’s emotions. In order to help your listener understand what you are feeling, translate these “implied blame” words into an explicitly named emotion (see Suggestion A, above) and an interpretation or unmet want (Message 3).

- For example: “I am feeling totally ignored by you” probably means “I am feeling really sad (or angry) because I want you to pay more attention to me, (spend more time with me, etc.)

- • Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued): The Five Messages: Suggestions for expressing more clearly: 3. What interpretations, wants, needs, memories or anticipations of yours support those feelings? A. Express the interpretations, wants, hopes, understandings and associations that support your feelings: ... because I imagine that... ... because I see that as...

... because I remember how... ... because I take that to mean ...

instead of ... because YOU ...(did, said, did not, etc.) B. Under our interpretations there are often unmet wants, hopes and needs. Explore and express the unmet wants that also support your feelings: ... because I wanted because I would have liked ...

... because I was hoping that... ... because I needed ...

instead of ... because YOU ...(did, said, did not, etc.) 4. What action, information or commitment do you want now? A. Ask for action or information, or for a present commitment to future action or information giving. Since most people cannot produce emotions on request, it is generally not productive to ask a person for an emotion (“I want you to cheer up.” “I want you to be angry about this issue.” Etc.) B. If your want is general, ask for a specific step toward it. Translate .open-ended requests, such as for “consideration, respect, help, understanding, support” etc., into specific action verbs such as please “listen, sit, lift, carry, tell me, hold me,” etc.

C. State your want in positive terms: “Please arrive at eight...” rather than “Don’t be late...” D. Include when, where, how. Including the details can help you to avoid big misunderstandings.

5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (no threats) In describing the specific positive results of receiving your request, you allow the other person to become motivated by feeling capable of giving something worthwhile. This prepares the ground for later expressions of appreciation, and points your relationship toward mutual appreciation and the exercise of competence (more enjoyable to live with), rather than guilt, duty, obedience or resentment (much less enjoyable to live with).

- Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued): Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format.

Elements of your experience: ...expressed as five different “I-messages”: 1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation) (I saw, heard, etc., ...) 2. What emotions are you feeling? (I felt...) 3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings? (because I...) 4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.

(and now I would like...) 5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (so that...) Elements of your experience: ...expressed as five different “I-messages”: 1. What are you seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing? (the facts without evaluation) (I saw, heard, etc., ...) 2. What emotions are you feeling? (I felt...) 3. What interpretations or wants of yours support those feelings? (because I...) 4. What action, information or commitment do you want now.

(and now I would like...) 5. What positive results will that action, information or commitment lead to in the future? (so that...) ,, 2

- Exercise for Challenge 3 (continued): Re-tell the story of some of your conflicts, frustrations and delights using the five-message format.

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