ART OF LISTENING

Dr. Mrs. Charusheela Birajdar
Principal
Raja Shree Shivraya Pratisthan’s, Maharashtra College of Science and Commerce, Pune, India
Email: charusheela_birajdar@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

In today’s business word, it is important to give attention to listening skills. Listening is an art which results in effective communication. In other words, in order to have effective communication skills, a person must have good listening ability. In the article, author wants to give more emphasis on how to improve listening skills and its importance in business word as well as personal life of listener.

Keywords: Listening, hearing & listening

INTRODUCTION

Listening is an art. Being always alert & increased active participation are the important signs of good listening. This is a mental skill to be developed primarily through planned efforts & effective training. No academic course teaches about art of listening. It is a life skill to be acquired through experiences in life. As there are other arts like music, dancing, painting, acting, listening is also an art.

In the art of listening, divergent thinking helps a lot. The tone, body language, message, practical situation, perception, reading between the lines aspect and voice etc. are very important elements to be studied deeply.

To develop art of listening, it is very essential to have lot of patience. Usually person looses patience while listening to other party. Any person who is full of anxiety may not be able to develop the art of listening. Concentration is one more characteristic necessary for good listening. If there is concentration on what the person is speaking, it will be easy to understand meaning of each and every word. By concentrating on the communication, we can keep our ear fully open and many confusions can be avoided. The situation will also be given full justice if we listen with full concentration. If we give full attention to the situation, we can live in present moment without distortion. Mindfulness can be more describing word to this. If our eyes, ears, mind, brain will only focus on the situation and on what the person speaking, lot of confusions or misunderstanding can be avoided by that.

EVERYONE THINK THEY’RE GREAT LISTENERS

Though it is said, good listening is an art in itself. There is difference between hearing and listening. Hearing isn't necessarily listening, nor it is necessarily listening well. As G.K. Chesterton said “there's lot of difference between hearing and listening.” The truth is, many people do conversations with agendas, whether that is to make themselves to be heard, or to make themselves not to be heard, and to actually escape the conversation altogether.

We never actually hear the people who speak to us. We don't put our entire attention, interest or heart into listening.
Listening is not the Same as Hearing. Hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that: it requires focus. Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language voice, and the body language of a person.

Listening is the conscious process which starts with hearing any particular thing.

Listening differs from obeying. Parents may commonly conflate the two, by telling a disobedient child that he "doesn't listen to me". However, a person who receives and understands information or an instruction, and then chooses not to react on it, has listened the speaker, even though the result is not what the speaker expected.

Effective listening skills are the ability to effectively understand information provided by the speaker, and show interest in the topic discussed. It can also include providing the speaker with feedback, such as asking pertinent questions; so the speaker knows the message is being understood.

Active Listening is a special way of reflecting back what the other person has expressed to let him/her know that you are listening and to check your understanding of his/her meaning. Active Listening is a restatement of the other person's communication, both the words and the accompanying feelings, i.e., nonverbal cues—tone of voice, facial expression, body posture. Active Listening requires that you suspend your own judgments, reactions or evaluations so that you can have a complete concentration on other person's thoughts and feelings.

Retaining is the second step in the listening process. Because everyone has different memories, the speaker and the listener may attach different meanings to the same statement.

Active listening involves the listener observing the speaker's behavior and body language. Having the ability to interpret a person's body language, the listener develops more accurate understanding of the speaker's message. It is important to note that the listener is not necessarily agreeing with the speaker but simply stating what was said.

Individuals in conflict often contradict each other. Ambiguity occurs when one listens to someone else's argument for its weaknesses and ignore its strengths. This may include a distortion of the speaker’s argument to gain a competitive advantage. On the other hand, if one finds that the other party understands, an atmosphere of cooperation can be created.

In the book Leader Effectiveness Training, Thomas Gordon, states "Active listening is certainly not complex. Listeners need only restate, in their own language, their impression of the expression of the sender. ... Still, learning to do Active Listening well is a rather difficult task .

**WHAT IS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEARING AND LISTENING?**

Hearing takes place when something disturbs the atmosphere and that disturbance takes the form of pressure waves that strike our ear drums as sound.

Listening is different. It’s the way we perceive sound. It expands on hearing when we pay attention to the meaning of what we hear. For example, a truck just rolled on the road in front of a house. People heard the noise but ignored.

Words are just vibrations in the atmosphere. We nod, smile, perhaps even respond, but no listening takes place. Listening requires that we open to the meaning of the other person’s words.

It’s no longer just about sound but about the meaningful thoughts, feelings, point of view, expectations, memories, sensations, beliefs — the whole of the other person — or at least as much of the whole as is available in the moment.

One simple way to understand listening is to ask yourself — what do I want from the other person when I want to be understood? What we want most is to be appreciated. Not just heard, technically, but to feel like the other person gets us.
In his book “Stranger in a Strange Land”, Robert Heinlein coined the word “grok.” It’s pronounced GRAHK, and it means to understand something so well that you fully absorb it into yourself. You know it through and through. You get it.

Listening is not automatic.

It needs practice.

It takes intention.

It requires efforts to focus on

The most important quality of listening is that you allow yourself to step aside and be mindful of the other’s experience. That doesn’t mean you have to abandon your own point of view. You merely set it aside for the time being till you are listening so you can be available to what other person want to communicate.

When you listen properly, the rewards are immediate. Because the better you listen the better you appreciate. The better you appreciate the other. The better you are connected. Better connection leads to better relations.

**NEW AGE LISTENING SKILLS**

There are few points to improve listening skills which can be considered as art of listening

**Make Eye Contact / Face to Face contact**

This is first rule of listening. It is necessary to consider the eyes of a person while communicating. If eye contact is not established it indicates that the person doesn’t even care about the other one.

**Don't Interrupt the flow of talking**

It is generally the habit of people to interrupt the other person when someone is talking. If a person is talking, it is necessary to master the art of listening. So even though, any good thought comes in the mind of other person he should not interrupt the flow of the person who is talking. Un-interrupted flow of listening should take place from sender to receiver.

**Practice "Active Listening"**

The art of listening also includes asking questions. These questions are for clarification, or for further explanation so that you can fully understand what the speaker is telling you. For instance, questions like these are brilliant: "Are you saying that ______", "What I heard you say was ______", "Did you mean that ______". The person who is listening can ask for clarifications.

**Show you Understand**

Another great way to show that you understand what the person is telling you is to nod. You can also make noises that show you're in tune with what the person is saying such as "yes", "yeah", "mhmm", "okay". This seems trivial, but it's important to demonstrate some interest and comprehension.

**Listen without Thinking**

In other words, listen without forming responses in your mind. Be wholehearted and listen to the entire message. It's very tempting to fill the spaces, as, our minds think around 800 words per minute, compared to 125-150 words we speak per minute. Don't miss valuable information by letting your mind wander!

**Listen without Judgement**

To effectively master the art of listening it's extremely important to withhold any negative evaluations or judgements. Make it your goal to be open minded all the time. As nobody wants to open up to narrow minded person. It also helps to be mindful of your "shut off" triggers, which are the specific
words, looks, or situations that cause you to stop listening. This way, you can prevent yourself from shutting off in the future.

Listen to Non-Verbal Communication
About 60% - 75% of our communication is non-verbal. In order to know whether to encourage the speaker, to open yourself more, or to be more supportive in approach, it's essential to know what the person's body language is. Do they display signs of discomfort? Are they untrusting you? Person must study the body languages.

Create a suitable Environment
It can be really difficult to listen to another person when the TV is screaming, mobile phone is buzzing and there are thousands of cars passing by. When all these distractions are removed, we can focus on conversation. It is much easier to listen empathetically with an open mind and whole heart. When a good place is found to discuss, importance is given to people to whom the conversation to be made. The person also feels warmth & care by such gesture

Observe Other People
One of the best way to become a better listener is to observe the way people interact with each other. It is necessary to create an "annoying habit" checklist. If you're brave enough, you can even ask someone you trust about what they like and dislike about the way you interact with others in conversation. It will give rise to healthy personality development

Generally, people think that they are effective listeners and therefore they don’t need to improve and develop their listening skills. In reality very few people are truly effective listeners. Attentive or active listening is not difficult to learn but it does involve practice and patience or to break wrong listening habits that have been learnt and reinforced over the period of time

CONCLUSION
“We have two ears and only one tongue in order that we may hear more and speak less.” The art of listening is an valuable life skill. Not only will it help you communicate better with your friends and family, but it will help you succeed in every area of your life.

REFERENCES