

Communication - The importance of listening

Listening is often something we take for granted. It is common that people often hear what is being said but hearing is a lot different to listening. To listen, we need to make a conscious effort not to just hear what people are saying but to take it in, digest it and understand.

Not only does listening enhance your ability to understand better and make you a better communicator, it also makes the experience of speaking to you more enjoyable to other people.

Why don't we listen sometimes?

Our ability to properly listen can be influenced by a number of things that could be going on in our own lives, or bad habits we have picked up. More than ever it is easy to become distracted by something, or by our own thoughts which disengages us from what is being said.

Some of the reasons why we don't properly listen are:

- Being wrapped up in our own thoughts
- Being distracted by something
- We have already formulated a response
- Something conflicting with our opinion

Why is listening important?

Listening plays an integral part of communicating and the differences from actively listening can be seen in multiple facets of our lives and development.

Active listening helps to:

- Learn and understand things better in a social and professional environment
- Become better at socialising
- Better sympathise with friends and family
- Build stronger relationships by making people feel valued
- Improve problem solving skills
- Absorb information better

What is active listening?

Active listening doesn't come naturally to us. It is something that we need to make a conscious effort to do. It takes practice and can be difficult to master. Active listening is what it says on the tin, it is fully concentrating on what is being said, digesting it without pre-judgement rather than hearing the general message.

How do I start active listening?

There are a couple of habits to get into which will help you master active learning. It requires practice and it is unlikely you will be able to do it all the time but to start you will need to:

- Concentrate on what is being said - don't be distracted and don't formulate a response early
- Show that you are engaged – look at the person speaking, nod occasionally to show that you're listening
- Wait for the speaker to finish speaking before asking questions and don't interrupt with a response
- Summarise your understanding if something large or complicated has been explained

All the points above can be applied to both personal and professional scenarios, some may be more relevant at certain times but generally if you try to focus on these you will find yourself being more engaged, and others finding you better to talk to.

Communication is key in most aspects of life, whether that be with friends, family, work colleague or partners. A lot of issues can be created or exacerbated through poor communication channels. Especially during times of social isolation during COVID-19 it is as important as ever to be engaging with people.

More information

If you would like to view the Webinar on 'Communication – The importance of listening' this is being delivered live on Thursday 16th July at 3pm-3.30pm, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6872254845463462155>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

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