Effective Communication Skills

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Warm Up

- How would you describe effective communication?

- What are the greatest challenges to good communication?

What are the greatest challenges to good communication?

- People who think communication is about WHAT YOU SAY, versus HOW YOU SAY IT

- People who focus too much on BEING HEARD, instead of LISTENING TO OTHERS

- People who use the WRONG CHANNEL TO SEND A MESSAGE, such as choosing to discuss a difficult situation with someone else through a weak channel such as TEXT, EMAIL, or THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE

- Not re-evaluating whether effective communication is happening, checking to see if people actually understood what was said.
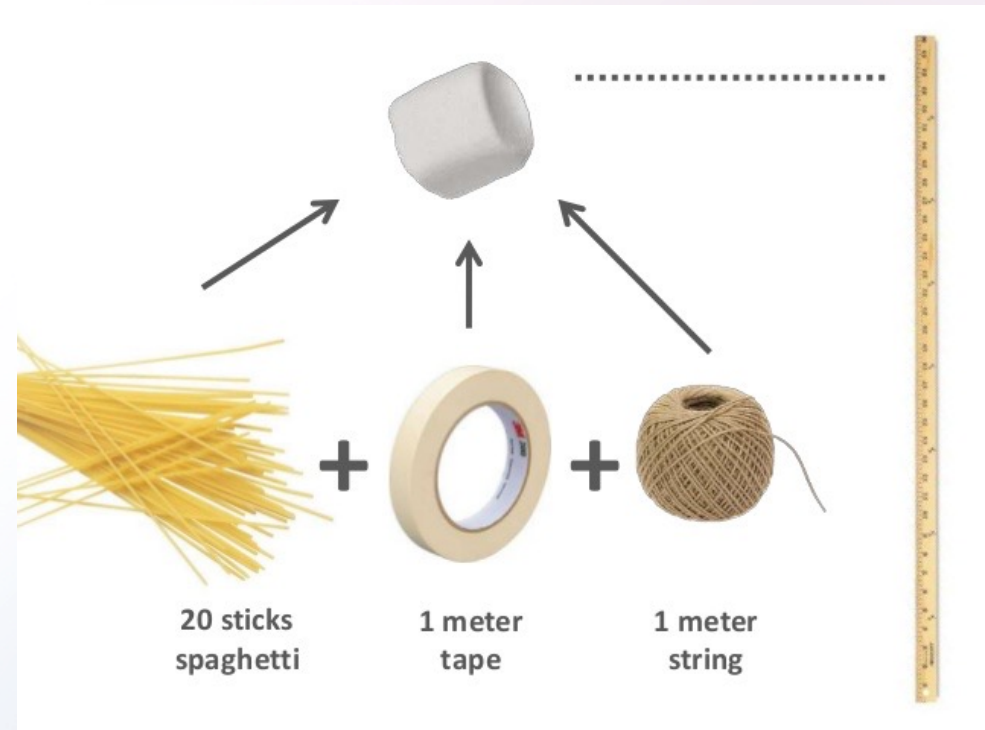
What is effective communication?

- Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose.

Marshmellow Challenge

Time: 18 minutes

Goal: Build the tallest freestanding structure

20 sticks spaghetti + 1 meter tape + 1 meter string

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Key Takeaways

- prototyping and iterating can help achieve success

- success is dependent upon close collaboration between team members

The Transmission Model of Communication

ENCODING

DECODING

NOISE

Message Channel

Sender

Receiver
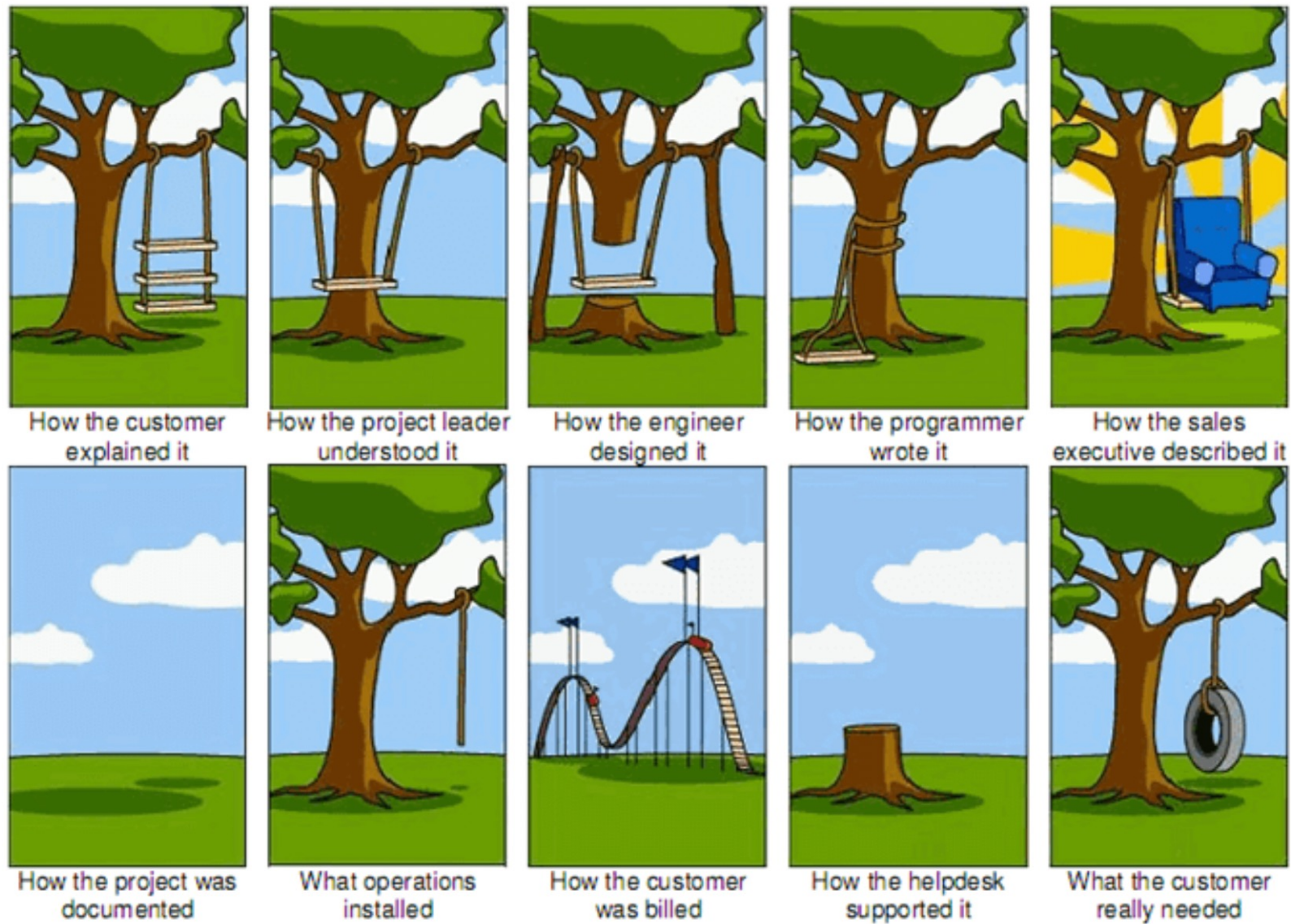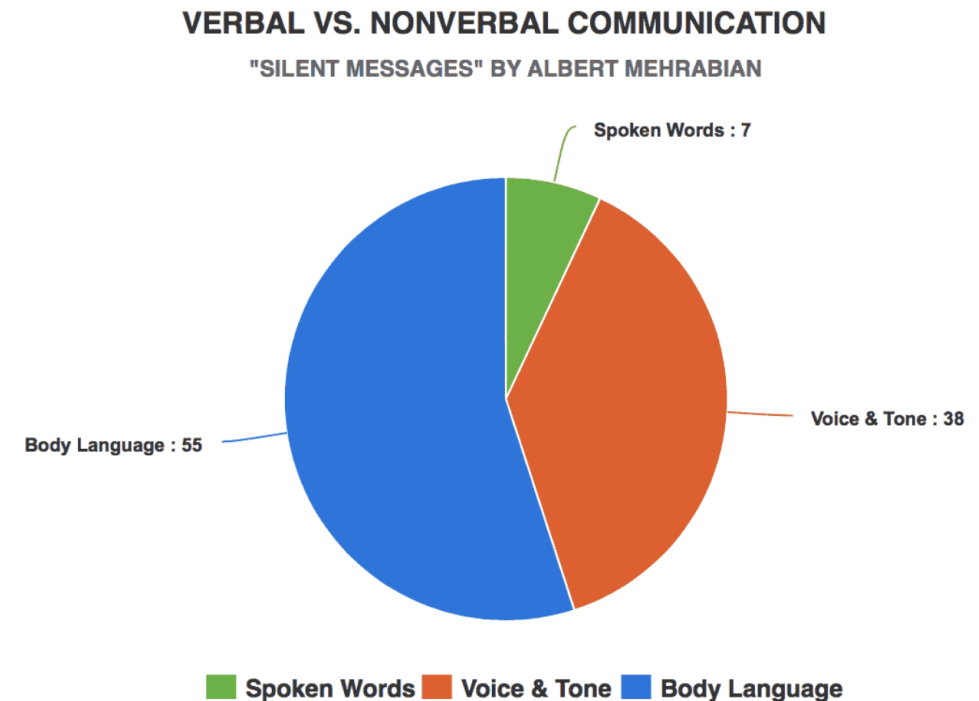
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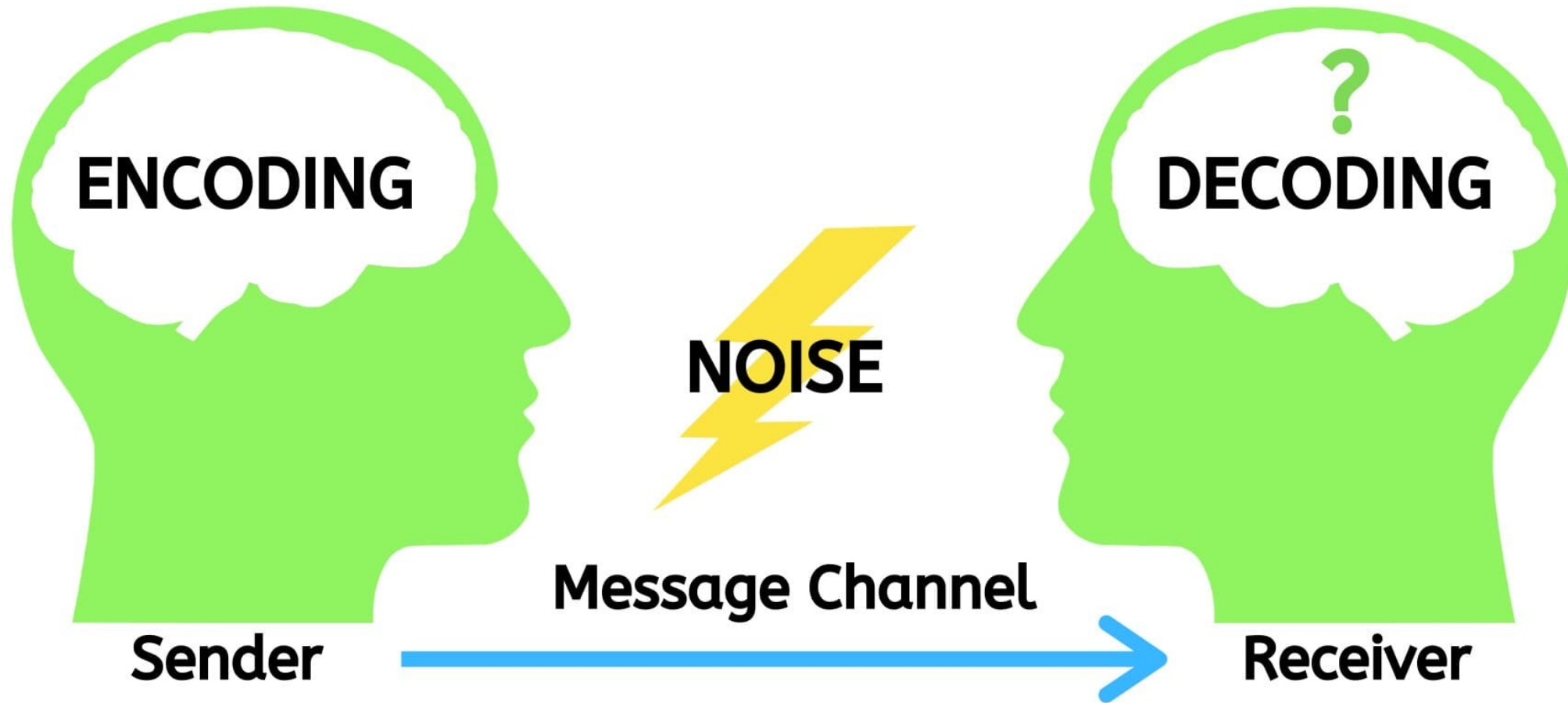
Agile Communciations & Team Building

Figure 1.4.1 *Project Management Tree Swing Cartoon.* [2]

Agile Communication Types

- Verbal Communication

- Non-Verbal Communication

- Written Communication

- Formal Communication

- Informal Communication

- Face-to-Face Communication

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Verbal vs. Non-Verbal Communication

- The receiver (the audience) overwhelmingly trusts the non-verbal aspects of the speaker: 93% vs. 7%.

- As an audience member, you trust what you see and hear, more than you trust the actual words.

VERBAL VS. NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

"SILENT MESSAGES" BY ALBERT MEHRABIAN

Spoken Words : 7

Voice & Tone : 38

Body Language : 55
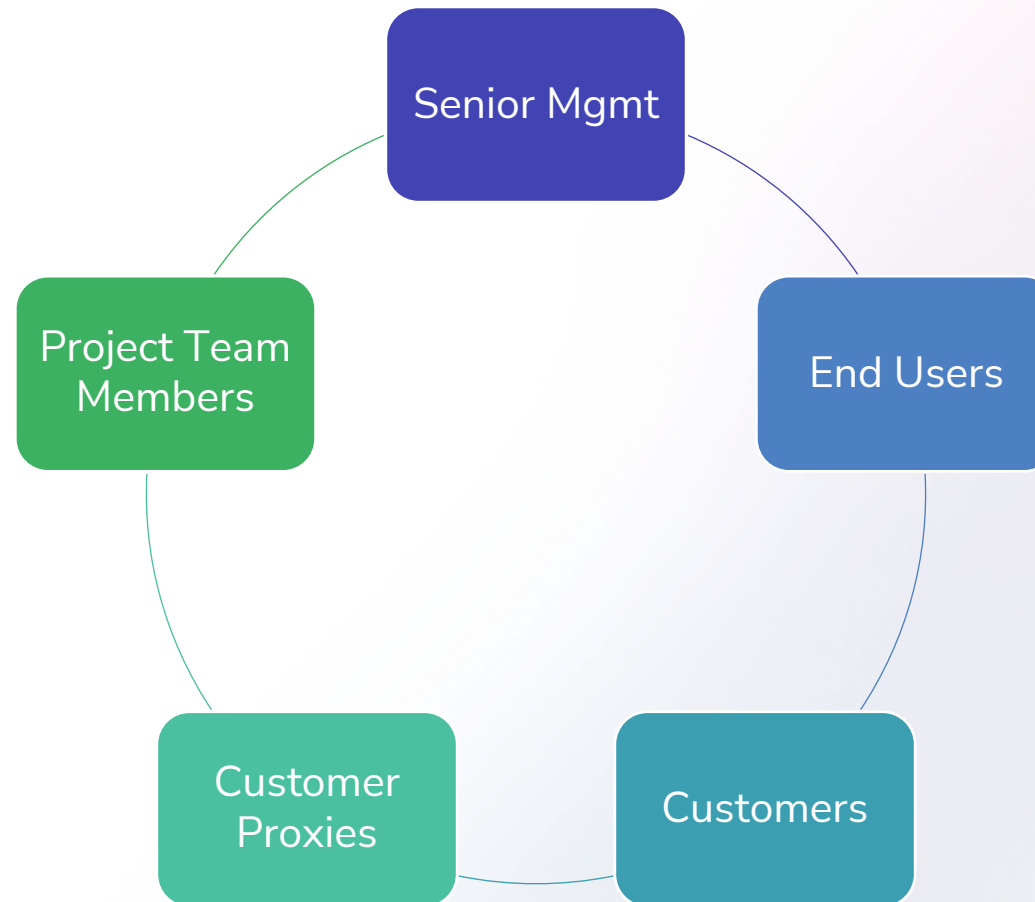
Spoken Words   Voice & Tone   Body Language

Key Takeaways

- Know when to use each specific type of communication

- Most highly desired communication type is Face-To-Face

Agile Stakeholder Communication

Agile Project Stakeholder Types

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- Senior Mgmt
- End Users
- Customers
- Customer Proxies
- Project Team Members

Agile Team Building

Tuckman's Team Development Model

- **Forming** –team forms their first impressions of others

- **Storming** – team members compete for acceptance of ideas

- **Norming** – team members begin to work naturally as a team, teams deliver high quality iterations

- **Performing** – team members work consistently and naturally as a team, have complete trust and are self-directing/managing

- **Adjourning** – when the project concludes and team members transition/celebrate success and review lessons learnt

Advanced Concepts in Agile Communication and Team Building

Safety and Trust in Agile

- Team Performance

- Problem Detection and Resolution

- Stakeholder Engagement

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Aspects of Safety

- Not physical danger "Personal Safety"

- Ego, pride, emotion, psyche, motivation

- Allows you to speak and act freely

- Enables individual and team improvement

Aspects of Trust

- Giving someone else power over oneself

- Some people are more trusting

- Others need time and don't easily trust

- Trust level depends on circumstances

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Psychological safety

"Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.""

Amy Edmondson

Harvard Business School Professor

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In her TEDx talk, Edmondson offers three simple things individuals can do to foster team psychological safety:

1. Frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem.

2. Acknowledge your own fallibility.

3. Model curiosity and ask lots of questions

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Characteristics of high-performance teams

- They are **self-organizing**, rather than role- or tide-based.

- They are **empowered** to make decisions.

- They truly believe that **as a team they can solve any problem.**

- They are committed to **team success** vs. success at any cost.

- The team **owns its decisions and commitments**.

- **Trust,** vs. fear or anger, motivates them.

- They are **consensus-driven,** with full divergence and then convergence.

- And they live in a world of constant **constructive disagreement.**

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

- **Absence of trust:** Team members are unwilling to be vulnerable within the group.

- **Fear of conflict:** The team seaks artificial harmony over constructive, passionate debate.

- **Lack of commitment:** Team members don't commit to group decisions or simply feign agreement with them.

- **Avoidance of accountability:** Team members duck the responsibility of calling peers on counterproductive behavior or low standards.

- **Inattention to results:** Team members prioritize their individual needs, such as personal success, status, or ego, before team success.

Effective Communication Tools

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ACTIVE LISTENING

The Three Levels of Listening

L1: Internal

L2: External

L3: Global

Attention on me
- Listening to speak or react
- "What this means for me"
- Judgments

Attention on them
- Listening to understand
- Letting go of an agenda
- Empathy

Intuition
- Listening to empower
- Paying attention to instincts
- Support

Image by Jason R. Waller

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Barriers to effective listening

- Noise (anything that interferes with your ability to attend to and understand a message)

- Attention Span

- Receiver Biases (I don't need to listen because I already know this)

- Listening Apprehension (fear that you might be unable to understand a message)

Tips to improve your active listening skills

1. Avoid interrupting

2. Listen without judgement

3. Paraphrase and summarize

4. Model positive nonverbal behavior

5. Ask specific, open-ended questions

THANK YOU!