

The Listening360 Online Assessment Report

Based on the
CARESS Model of Listening
by Dr. Tony Alessandra
and the **Listen for Success** Model
by Steve Shapiro

Personalized Report for:
Sample Report

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Listening360: Introduction

Listening - we do it constantly. So why must we go through a program to learn what we already know how to do? Listening is natural! Or . . . is it?

Ineffective listening is one of the most frequent causes of:

- misunderstandings
- mistakes
- jobs that need to be redone
- lost sales and customers

The consequences of ineffective listening are:

- lower employee productivity
- missed sales
- unhappy customers
- billions of dollars of increased costs and lost profits

Ineffective listening is a factor in:

- low employee morale
- increased turnover - employees do not feel their managers listen to their needs, suggestions or complaints

Poor listening is also one of the primary contributors to divorce and to the inability of a parent and child to openly communicate. Also, people view poor listeners as boorish, self-centered, disinterested, preoccupied, and socially unacceptable! If all of these negatives result from ineffective listening, why don't we listen effectively?

1. Requires Effort

Listening is more than just keeping quiet. An active listener registers increased blood pressure, a higher pulse rate, and more perspiration. It means concentrating on the other person rather than on ourselves.

2. Information Overload

In today's society there is enormous competition for our attention from advertisements, radio, TV, movies, reading material, and more. With all these incoming stimuli, we have learned to screen out that information that we deem irrelevant. Sometimes we also screen out things that are important to us.

3. Rush to Action

We think we know what the person is going to say, so we jump in and interrupt, rather than taking the time to hear the person out.

4. Speed Difference

There is a considerable difference between speech speed and thought speed. The average person speaks at about 135 to 175 words a minute, but can listen to 400 to 500 words a minute. So, the poor listener spends the difference in the two speeds (about 225 - 325 words per minute) on daydreams . . . or on thoughts of what he is going to say next or in mentally arguing with the person speaking. It's like listening to two voices at the same time.

5. Lack of Training

We do more listening than speaking, reading or writing, yet we receive little formal education in it. Typically, students get NO listening education through their first 12 years of schooling!

Although many people assume they are good listeners, few actually are. The average employee spends about three-quarters of each working day in verbal communications. Nearly one-half of that is spent on listening. Incredibly, the average employee's listening effectiveness is only 25%.

The normal, untrained listener is likely to understand and retain only about 50% of a conversation, which drops to an even less impressive 25% retention rate 48 hours later. This means that recall of a particular conversation that took place more than a couple of days ago will always be incomplete and usually inaccurate. No wonder people can seldom agree about what has been discussed! Listening well is obviously important, but how does it really benefit you?

Active listening:

1. Improves the environment at work, at home, and in sales.
2. Reduces relationship tensions and hostilities.
3. Saves time by reducing mistakes and misunderstandings.
4. Reduces employee turnover.
5. Leads to early problem solving.
6. Increases sales and profits.
7. Promotes reciprocity - "If you listen to me, I'll listen to you."

With all of these benefits, I hope you're now convinced that listening is more than just a natural behavior and that it requires some work to improve. What's the key to improving your listening skills? To listen effectively, you must *CARESS* those you're listening to.

The CARESS Model

C A R E S S - these letters represent the six steps that, when followed, will help you become an active listener:

C Concentrating - *focus your attention on the speaker and only on the speaker.*

A Acknowledging - *acknowledge your speaker by demonstrating your interest and attention.*

R Researching & Responding - *gather information about your speaker through the skillful use of questions and statements.*

E Exercising Emotional Control - *by dealing successfully with highly charged messages in a thoughtful manner.*

S Sensing - *sense the nonverbal messages of your speaker by observing what he's saying with his body language.*

S Structuring - *structure or organize the information you get through your listening, observation and note taking.*

Listening360 Profile

Before you begin working to improve your listening skills, take time to respond to the questions below. Your responses will help you determine what specific skills need improvement.

You rate others' listening skills

Using a scale of 1-10 (10 is perfect), rate the following people as listeners. After rating each person, identify one listening behavior that led to your rating.

Your immediate supervisor	_____	_____
A good friend	_____	_____
Best listener you know	_____	_____
Your spouse/partner	_____	_____
Worst listener you know	_____	_____
Yourself	_____	_____

At work

Name several work situations in which you find it difficult to listen:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

List some of the results from ineffective listening in your work environment:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

In your work environment, are there some people or situations in which you frequently "tune out?" Who/What are they?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Listening recall...

Use just a few words to describe a time when:

- You daydreamed as you were listening when you needed to pay attention...

- You tried to listen to someone speak while reading or doing something else...

- You stopped listening because the information was too hard to understand...

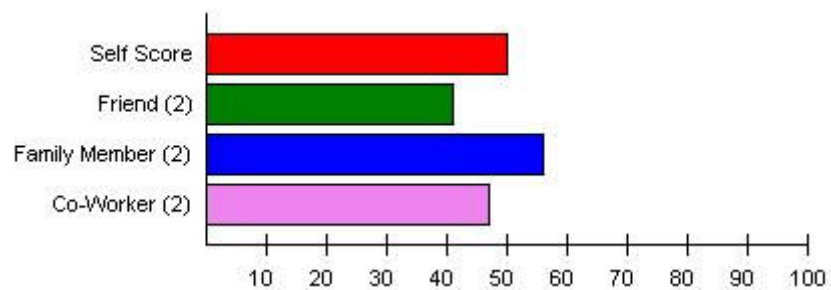
- You mentally or verbally rejected someone's idea before they had a chance to finish telling you about it...

- You intentionally made a point to listen with particular attention to someone who was speaking...

- Because you were listening carefully, you picked up a feeling behind the words that allowed you to respond appropriately and meaningfully...

- You lost, or almost lost a sale because something was miscommunicated...

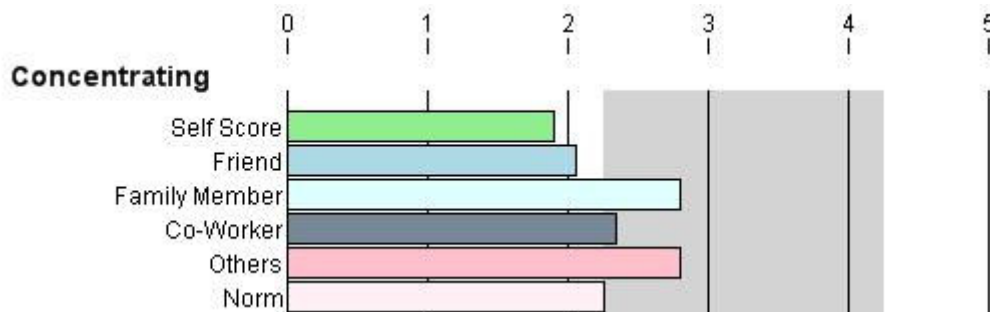
Here are your overall scores on the Listening360 online assessment:



Concentrating

Here is your overall score for Concentrating topic and your scores for each individual Concentrating question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 49



How would you evaluate yourself as a listener most of the time in most situations? Typically, people listen at one of four basic levels of attentiveness. Each level demonstrates a particular depth of concentration and sensitivity on the part of the listener. The levels don't have distinct lines of difference, but they do represent general categories into which people fall. Depending on the situation or circumstance in which you as a listener find yourself, these categories may even overlap. As you listen and move from the first, to the second, to the third, and on to the fourth level, your potential for understanding, trust, and effective communication increases. Let's take a closer look at each category:

1. The Non-Listener

Listeners on this level make no effort to concentrate or to hear what the other person is saying. Non-listeners are recognized by their blank stares and nervous mannerisms. Sometimes they fake attention while thinking about unrelated matters. They constantly interrupt and always have to have the last word. They are usually perceived as insensitive.

2. The Marginal Listener

Marginal listeners hear the sounds and others' words, but not the meaning and intent. Marginal listeners are easily distracted by their own thoughts and outside distractions. They prefer to evade difficult presentations or discussions. When they do listen, they tend to listen only for the data instead of the main ideas. Marginal listening is truly hazardous. Because the listener is only superficially concentrating on what is being said, misunderstandings can result.

3. The Evaluative Listener

These listeners use more concentration, give more attention to what is being said, and are actively trying to hear what the speaker is saying. But they are not making an effort to understand the speaker's intent. They tend to be logical listeners, more concerned about content than feelings - remaining emotionally detached from the conversation. They evaluate the message on the basis of the words delivered, ignoring that part of the message that is carried in the speaker's vocal intonation, body language, and facial expressions. Evaluative listeners are good with semantics, facts, and statistics but poor in sensitivity, empathy and true understanding.

4. The Active Listener

The highest level of listening, active listening is also the most demanding. It requires the deepest level of concentration, attention and processing effort - mental as well as emotional. Active listeners avoid personal feelings and making judgments about a speaker's message, and focus instead on understanding the point of view. Their attention is concentrated on the thoughts and feelings of the other person as well as the spoken word. Active listening also requires listeners to send verbal and nonverbal feedback to the speaker indicating that what is being said is really being absorbed.

The active listener *concentrates* completely on the speaker, eliminating as many distractions as possible. These distractions - or barriers to listening - fall into three major categories, each of which has negative effects on the communication process as a whole - External Environmental, External *Speaker*-related and Internal *Listener*-related.

- Distractions that are **external environmental** include various noises in the room, other people talking at the same time, poor acoustics, bad odors, an uncomfortable room (too cold, too hot, too humid. . . even an uncomfortable chair), visual distractions (e.g., passersby or outside traffic), and physical disruptions such as telephone calls or visitors, or a radio or TV on while you're trying to talk or listen.
- Distractions that are **external speaker-related** include the way the speaker is dressed, poor grooming, disturbing mannerisms (e.g., nervous twitch or the jiggling of change in a pocket), certain facial expressions or body language or accent or speaking style.
- As for the distractions that are **internal listener-related**, there are two kinds.
 - One is the internal physical distractions. For example, if it's close to your lunch or quitting time, you will tend to listen less or be preoccupied. If you have a headache or are very tired, if you're under time constraints or considerable pressure, or if you're in pain or discomfort, it's quite likely that you'll be distracted and won't be listening with your full attention.
 - The second type of internal listener-related distraction is internal psychological barriers. These include a person's inner voice that prompts one to think while another person is talking; being closed-minded to new ideas or material; boredom or daydreaming; personal values and beliefs that might prevent you from listening to another's point of view; and past experiences and future expectations. Even physical proximity to the speaker can be a psychological barrier.

Check them out! Distractions

Now that we've discussed the different distractions that can occur, what distractions do you normally experience when you are trying to listen to:

- Your spouse: _____

- Your children: _____

- Anyone who calls you at home: _____

- Your boss: _____

- Your co-worker: _____

- Your parent(s): _____

- Your friend(s): _____

All distractions create barriers that prevent the message from getting from the speaker to you, the listener. One way to diminish these distractions is to determine which ones are within your control. Although you have little or no control over the external speaker-related distractions, you do have a great deal of control over the external environmental distractions. As for your own internal psychological and internal physical distractions, your control will vary. Since you can have considerable control over the external environmental distractions, here are some ways you can either minimize them or eliminate them altogether:

1. Create a receptive listening environment.

A receptive listening environment is a place that has the minimum number or level of audio or visual distractions. If you're meeting at someone's place of business, you have less control over the external environment. However, if there are a lot of distractions, such as phones ringing or frequent interruptions, you can recommend moving into a meeting room with more privacy. If that's not possible, suggest a later meeting in a more receptive listening environment.

2. Avoid violating another person's personal space.

When you're talking, keep in mind that some people may be very open and like to communicate in close proximity, while others may tend to be more self-contained and want to keep a greater physical distance. Contact-oriented people tend to sit much closer to those with whom they are speaking. They communicate much closer as well and they even touch when they communicate.

Some cultural backgrounds in which this is common are Italian, Arab, Greek, several of the Mediterranean cultures, French, and the Latin American cultures. Examples of non-contact cultures would include the Japanese, the German, the English and to some degree the American.

3. When distractions can't be avoided, minimize them by totally focusing and concentrating on the speaker. Use the following four techniques of applied concentration to help you focus and concentrate on the speaker:

a. ***Take a deep breath.***

When you feel that you must interrupt for any reason, take in a long, deep, leisurely breath. Try it now; then try to speak. Impossible, isn't it?

b. ***Make a conscious decision to listen to the speaker.***

This decision is under your control; commit to it. At times you may be listening to someone who, for some reason, mentally turns you off. When this or any kind of distraction occurs, think, "I am listening only to this speaker."

c. ***Mentally paraphrase what the speaker is saying.***

Mentally paraphrasing what the speaker is saying will prevent you from daydreaming or thinking of irrelevant and superfluous topics, especially if the speaker to whom you are listening speaks slowly. Try to echo, rephrase, evaluate, anticipate, and review what the speaker is saying so that you focus and concentrate on the speaker instead of yourself.

d. ***Visually observe the other person.***

Keep in mind the Hitchhiking Theory: Where your eyes focus, your ears will follow. You are most likely to listen to what you are looking at. Make direct eye contact for several seconds before looking away. Avoid prolonged eye contact; it may convey either intimidation or intimacy.

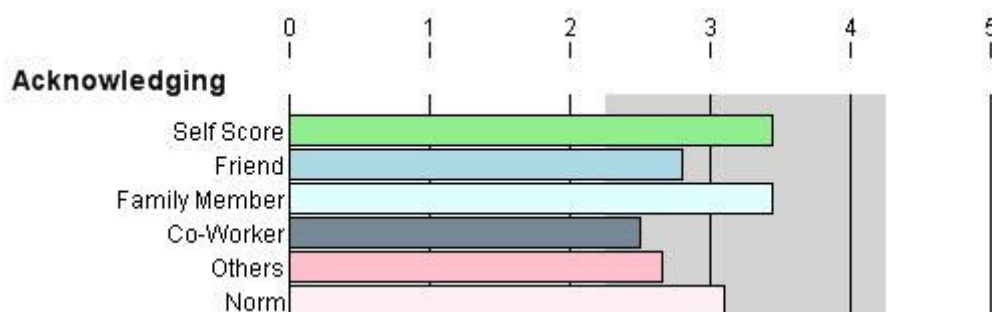
CARESS those you're listening to by completely concentrating on them:

- Eliminate or minimize all distractions.
- Focus your attention solely and directly on those speaking.

Acknowledging

Here is your overall score for Acknowledging topic and your scores for each individual Acknowledging question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 58



Acknowledging means giving positive, observable, and frequently audible signs to the speaker that they are listening to, understanding, and appreciating what the speaker says. It communicates an attitude of acceptance of the speaker. Not acknowledging communicates disapproval and rejection, and end the communication process altogether.

Think of a person with whom you enjoy sharing conversations. In the chart below, use an "O" to mark the ways in which that person shows an interest in what you are saying.

Glances sideways	Looks in your eyes
Sighs	Touches your arm or hand
Leans away from you	Leans toward you
Crosses arms on chest	Smiles frequently
Stares	Maintains a pleasant expression
Sneers	Grins
Yawns	Sits so as to face you directly
Frowns	Nods affirmatively as you speak
Looks at the ceiling or elsewhere	Licks lips
Shakes head negatively	Raises eyebrows
Cleans fingernails	Keeps eyes wide open
Cracks knuckles	Uses gestures while speaking
Jingles change or rattles keys	Gives fast glances

Now, for a change, think of someone whom you find very difficult to talk with and with whom you feel uncomfortable. That person may be a co-worker or an acquaintance - someone you may see frequently or just occasionally. Return to the chart above and, using an "X," mark those characteristics often displayed by the person you now have in mind.

What have you discovered? Are most of the O's in the column on the right? Are most of the X's in the left column? The characteristics listed in the right column are the positive examples of non-verbal acknowledging. Those characteristics listed on the left are examples of negative non-verbal acknowledging or non-acknowledging.

In addition to the non-verbal acknowledgment, an active listener acknowledges the speaker verbally as well with such comments as, "I see," "Uh-huh," "Then what?" "Mmmm," "Really?" Even emphatic comments such as, "I don't believe it!" show the listener that you're alert, you're listening and that you care.

When acknowledging your speaker both verbally and non-verbally, you accomplish many things that build trust and increase the speaker's comfort level. Through your acknowledgment, the speaker knows that you:

1. Are **listening**.
2. Understand the **content** of what is being said.
3. Understand how he/she **feels**.
4. Understand the essential **meaning** of what is being said.
5. Are **interested** in him/her and what is said.

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."
Dale Carnegie

Acknowledging Exercise

1. When you are sharing your important ideas or feelings, what forms of acknowledgment are important to you? List at least three or four, with the most important ways at the top of the list.

- (1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

2. How do you feel about yourself or your ideas when you are not acknowledged, or not acknowledged in the ways that are important to you?

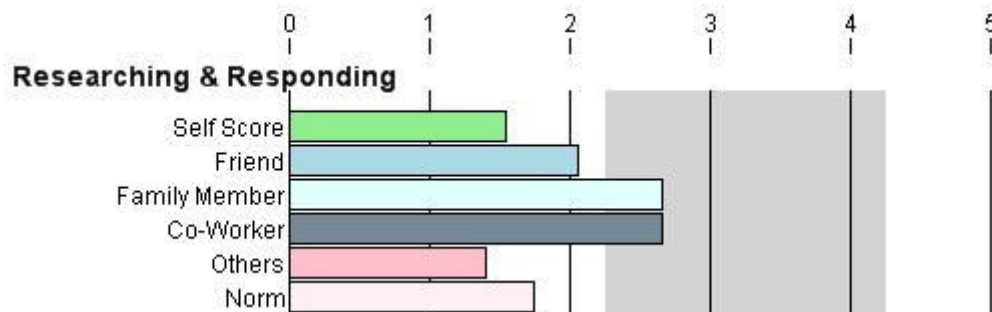
3. How do you feel about the other person and about your relationship?

4. How do you know when someone you are talking with is sharing ideas or feelings that are important to them?

Researching and Responding

Here is your overall score for Researching & Responding topic and your scores for each individual Researching & Responding question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 42



Researching . . . the term may conjure up images of burning the midnight oil at the library to finish one of many term papers. Or, it may cause you to think of test tubes and laboratories - *not* conversation! "Research" is the art of asking questions, whether it is in the formal arenas of laboratories and libraries or the informal atmosphere of conversation.

As an *active* listener, you use researching and responding to maintain the two-way flow of a conversation. It's the information-gathering techniques of questioning and feedback. Researching and responding enable you to clarify what you've heard, to enlarge upon a subject or to go into a particular topic in more depth. They allow you to encourage the speaker to change the direction of the conversation or prompt him to "vent" feelings like anger, excitement, and enthusiasm. Researching and Responding also allow you to support and reinforce particular points that someone has made.

A person who doesn't *actively* participate in the conversation through questions and feedback will make the speaker feel uncomfortable by creating an information imbalance. An information imbalance occurs when one person does all the talking and provides all the information while the other person simply listens - or *appears* to listen. Eventually the speaker becomes concerned that the listener knows a lot about him or where he stands on an issue, but he doesn't know *anything* about the listener. Such a situation can make the speaker feel tense and suspicious. On the other hand, if you're the one doing most of the talking and you don't ask questions about the listener and his message, the listener can become bored or even frustrated because you show no interest in anyone but yourself.

Your ability to ask the right questions at the right time while responding with appropriate *feedback* are essential and integral parts of researching and responding.

Researching - Using the Right Questions to Gather Information

One of the most fundamental questioning techniques is to start with broad, open questions, then building on the speaker's responses by asking narrower, more specific questions. This is called the funnel technique. It's like painting a picture - you start with a blank canvas, and then fill in the background with broad brush strokes. You then gradually add more and more detail with smaller, finer brush strokes until you have a complete picture. With questions, you start out at the top of the funnel with broad, open-ended questions and then as you move down the funnel, you ask specific, closed-ended questions to fill in the details.

Broad, open-ended questions show your interest in the other person's situation. The beauty of such questions is their ability to encourage and increase dialogue. They are much more powerful than closed-ended questions that require a simple answer such as "yes" or "no" or a specific piece of information. After a broad question is used to encourage the speaker and build rapport, the artful questioner builds follow-up questions by identifying operative words in the speaker's responses. This adds to his understanding of the information being shared by the speaker.

Below is an example of using operative words. Imagine two people meeting on an airplane - the operative words used to build the next response are shown in **bold**:

"Hello, my name is Ellen. What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a **writer**."

"A writer.... what kind of writing do you do?"

"Mostly **humor**. Occasionally I write something serious or philosophical but people seem to laugh at that, too."

"Humor - I've always thought that must be the hardest kind of writing to do. Tell me how you do it."

"Well, for me, it's one part sarcasm, two parts irreverence and a dash of creativity. I shake the whole thing up and hope it doesn't explode in my face!"

The initial broad questions are comfortable for the speaker to answer. They give the speaker the freedom to tell you whatever he wants. By the time you ask more specific questions, he can see where you're heading with your questions and will be more willing to share information with you. Their willingness to share tends to increase as they provide more information to you.

Guidelines for Using Questions

1. Keep your questions simple - ask one question at a time.

"What do you think about the marketing plan and will the new ad campaign confuse customers and would that confusion actually be beneficial to the long term product growth?" is a multi-part question where people either answer only one part or only the part that they felt comfortable with.

2. Follow a topic to its conclusion.

When you ask a question, keep on track and don't allow yourself to wander. Any question that starts with, "By the way," is probably going off on a tangent. Hold that question for later.

3. Be sure that your questions are non-threatening.

Trust is a key essential in communication. The wrong question can quickly destroy trust and rapport. "Why didn't you ☐?" "How could you ☐?" "Aren't you ☐?" "Did you really believe ☐?" are all questions that make people defensive. Once someone throws up a wall of defense, the opportunity for building rapport evaporates.

One important tip on formulating open-ended questions is to make sure they're as neutral as possible. Here are three examples of open-ended questions on the same topic. Which one would you describe as the most neutral?

1. "What have you been doing to improve the morale in your department?"
2. "Why do you suppose morale has been so bad in your department lately?"
3. "Tell me what's been going on lately in terms of morale in your department."

The third question is the most neutral, because it's the one in which the questioner reveals the least amount of bias. The first one - "What have you been doing to improve morale?" - implies something is amiss and may put the speaker on the defensive. Of course, if you've already determined that "improvement" is what you're talking about, then it can be a perfectly fine question.

Using Questions to Research

In general, questions have three primary functions - to **expand**, to **clarify**, and to **redirect**.

☐ **Expansion** questions give you a broader picture - use them when you want to get as much information as

possible from the other person. They allow the speaker to reply in whatever form, level of detail and direction she likes. This type of question is useful at the beginning of almost every kind of conversation, whether the topic involves facts or feelings. Be sure to keep these questions neutral. Examples include:

"Tell me more about that," "How would that work?" or "What would that mean to you?"

□ When you are unsure about a given area, or unclear about what the speaker has said, you use **clarifying** questions. Clarifying questions can also help the speaker; for example in a sales situation when the customer has only a vague idea of their needs. If a speaker has used a broad statement that he wants you to take at face value, clarifying questions help you get at the speaker's real meaning. Some examples:

- *"I'm not quite sure I understand..."*
- *"I want to be sure I understand..."*
- *"Can you give me an example?"*
- *"What exactly do you mean by...?"*

□ When you need to change the direction of the conversation, you **redirect**. You acknowledge the current point or issue and then ask a broad question that brings up a new issue. In this way, you are redirecting the conversation to an area not previously discussed. You might ask:

"Okay...I think I understand what's important to you here. Could you tell me how you feel about (something else)...?"

In summary, as you actively listen, you research by asking speakers to tell you a little bit about their situation through the use of broad questions. When they respond, you can ask them one of the three types of questions: you can ask them to expand on what they have said, you can ask them to clarify what they have said if you didn't understand, or you can redirect them to a new area with another broad, open-ended question.

Using Feedback

Feedback is the other method used to gather and verify information. Without feedback, it is difficult for the listener to really know what the speaker is trying to communicate. The effective use of feedback helps ensure that you receive an accurate message.

You use feedback whenever you react verbally, vocally or visually to what another person says or does. Listening *actively* depends on it.

As a listener, you give feedback in several ways. Over the course of a conversation, you might use a combination of verbal feedback, non-verbal feedback and feeling feedback. Each serves a specific purpose in active listening.

Verbal Feedback

You use verbal feedback to give and to ask for clarification of what the speaker said, and to encourage the speaker to continue.

In demonstrating that you understood what was said, reflect your understanding back to the speaker. Note that we said, "*reflect* back..." rather than "*repeat* back." In other words, be sure that you use your own words; otherwise you will simply be parroting the speaker's words instead of demonstrating your understanding. Here's an example:

Speaker: "No one in management ever seems to respond to the concerns voiced by those on the staff."

Listener: (Parroting) "You don't think anyone in management responds to the concerns voiced by those on the staff."

Listener: (Reflective verbal feedback) "You seem to be unhappy with the apparent lack of response

from management on concerns voiced by the staff."

To clarify your understanding of what was said, you can use such phrases as:

"I get the impression that you feel..."
"I sense that..."
"It sounds like you..."
"In other words..."
"What I'm hearing is..."

Be sure to vary your introductory words when clarifying what has been said, otherwise it will appear as though you're really not listening but simply following a script.

Bad Example:

Listener: "If I understand what you said..."
Listener: (after a few moments) "If I understand what you said..."
Listener: (after a few moments) "If I understand what you said..."

Good Example:

Listener: "If I understand what you said..."
Listener: (after a few moments) "It sounds like you..."
Listener: (after a few moments) "In other words..."

Questions are an excellent form of feedback. Verbal feedback can take the form of broad questions and the appropriate follow-up questions that build on the speaker's responses.

Non-verbal Feedback

In the previous chapter, we discussed the need to acknowledge the speaker - projecting positive non-verbal feedback to the speaker through gestures and utterances such as "Uh-huh," "I see," "Go on," etc. People want feedback - they *need* feedback. They don't like to talk with people who don't respond or show any emotion. Non-verbal feedback also lets the speaker know that her message is getting through.

Feeling Feedback

Obviously a firm understanding of the words, phrases, and facts of a message is important. However, that still represents just surface understanding. Why is the person saying the things she is saying? What are the underlying causes and motivations behind her message? How does she really feel about what she is saying to you? Does she know whether her message is getting through to you at the feeling level? Is she aware that you really care about what she is saying to you?

All these questions underscore the importance of feeling feedback in active listening. Feeling feedback should be two-directional. You need to make a concerted effort to understand the feelings, emotions, and attitudes that underlie the message that comes to you. In addition, you should clearly project feeling feedback to the other person to demonstrate that her message has gotten through to you - at the feeling level.

Feeling feedback is a meeting of the hearts. It is nothing more than the effective use of empathy - putting yourself into the other person's shoes so that you can see things from his point of view. When you can appreciate the other person's true feelings and at the same time project this emotional awareness, it serves to reinforce rapport, lower interpersonal tension, and significantly increase trust. Supportive verbal responses and the projection of appropriate non-verbal signals are key to sending and receiving feeling feedback.

To check for accuracy...

When listening to someone, try to read the primary feeling they are projecting and respond to that feeling, allowing the person to agree or to correct your "reading." For example:

Listener: "You seem to be somewhat distressed about the way Bob managed the situation."

Speaker: *"Somewhat distressed? Are you kidding? I'm angry! He mismanaged the entire situation!"*

To uncover concerns...

Here are some brief examples of the listener using feedback to uncover concerns:

"You think the idea is basically sound, but it seems to have some flaws. What do you think could be done to minimize the flaws?"

"Is this the situation: You feel that if I don't take care of this now, it won't get done?"

"Something seems to be bothering you about what I said. Can you tell me about it?"

"I'm aware that you've followed a different policy of handling returns in the past. We felt this new procedure would help streamline things. Can you tell me what about the new policy concerns you?"

Feeding Back Feelings - Empathy Statements

Another technique that is excellent for getting people to respond and share their feelings and thoughts with you is the use of empathy statements. Empathy statements consist of three specific parts:

1. *Making a tentative statement*
2. *Defining the feeling*
3. *Putting the feeling into its situational context*

An example of an empathy statement is:

"It seems to me that you're very frustrated because you can't get the product to work the way you want it to work."

The phrase, "It seems to me" is the tentative statement. The phrase, "you're very frustrated" defines the feeling. The phrase, "because you can't get the product to work the way you want it to work" is putting the feeling into its situational context - the situation that caused the speaker to experience the feeling of frustration.

Mastering the skill of researching - asking appropriate questions and using appropriate *feedback* - will help you build rapport, clarify information and stimulate the views and opinions of others.

Using Empathy Statements

Using empathy statements takes time and practice. Give yourself some practice by creating an empathy statement that responds to each of the comments below. Refer to the discussion on the previous page for help.

(1) "Things at work are driving me crazy - sometimes I feel like never going to work again!"

Tentative Statement:

Feeling Statement:

Situational Context:

(2) "I can't believe that I've been laid off after 15 years of service to my company! All those years, just down the drain!"

Tentative Statement:

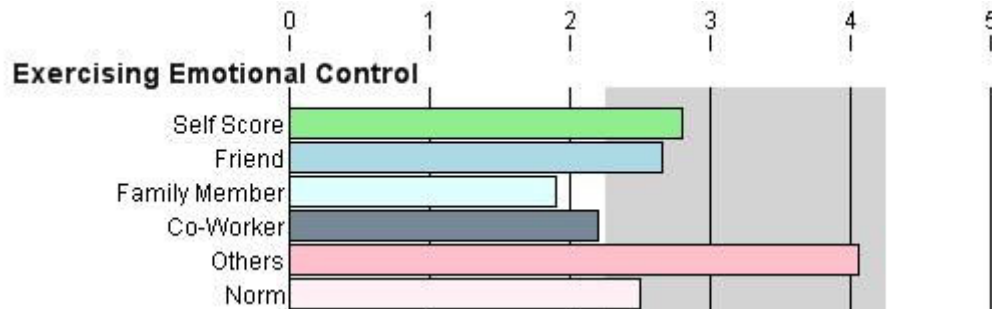
Feeling Statement:

Situational Context:

Exercising Emotional Control

Here is your overall score for Exercising Emotional Control topic and your scores for each individual Exercising Emotional Control question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 54



How often have you found yourself listening to someone and, rather than truly listening, you found yourself turned off or tuned out? The other person may be someone as significant as your spouse, or as important as your boss, or a temporary, brief acquaintance at a convention. You find yourself feeling embarrassed or disgusted or uncomfortable or just "out of sorts." What has happened to you, the active listener? Unexpectedly, you have suddenly become a non-listener. Why? Because you weren't exercising *emotional control*.

Exercising emotional control means understanding and controlling our filters and blind spots. Normally we aren't consciously aware of how our past experiences influence our present behavior. Over the years, our socialization and maturation result in the creation of filters through which we process everything we see, hear and do. At times, without our being aware of it, these filters determine our attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, values, perceptions, behavior and feeling patterns and self-concept.

The single most important factor affecting interpersonal communication is the self-concept. People's beliefs about themselves are always the determining factor in their communicative behavior. The self is the star in every act of communication, including listening. When your dearly-held values and beliefs happen to conflict with the *speaker's* dearly-held beliefs, strong emotional reactions (and over-reactions) can occur.

What causes an emotional reaction while you're listening to someone? It's usually caused by something about the speaker himself or what he is saying. Often, differences in values, beliefs, attitudes, education, speed of delivery and a host of other things cause a disruption in communication between the speaker and the listener.

The speaker may have certain dress habits or speech patterns or other idiosyncrasies that might turn off the listener or cause the listener to negatively or positively bias the speaker's message. For example, going to a bank for a loan dressed in clothing that is too casual might negatively influence the bank manager concerning your ability to repay the loan.

A person's accent is another example of what can cause an emotional reaction in the listener. For instance, there is no doubt that people make value judgments about the intelligence of a person with a Brooklyn accent versus one with a New England accent. One accent is often seen as more intelligent, better educated, more cultured and more articulate than the other. In many cases, a foreign accent conjures up stereotypical cultural images about the speaker in the mind of the listener.

Loaded words can cause severe emotional reactions on the part of the listener, as do ethnic, racial or religious jokes. Other common blind spots can include the speaker's overall image, body language, grammar or vocabulary.

A Formula for Emotional Control

If we are going to be active listeners, we must learn to exercise emotional control so we don't block or bias the true meaning of the speaker's message. To help you exercise that emotional control, here's a very simple formula to keep in mind:

$$\text{EEC} = \text{R1} + \text{R2} + \text{R3}$$

(Exercising Emotional Control = Recognize + Redirect + Resolve)

R1: Recognize

Recognize and admit that a strong emotional reaction is brewing through:

- An increased heartbeat or respiration
- An irresistible desire to interrupt
- Feelings of anger and frustration
- Facial flush
- A sharp, sudden increase in irritability
- Loss of your train of thought and/or an inability to follow the speaker's delivery

R2: Redirect

Once you recognize an emotional reaction brewing, you must redirect that negative energy:

1. Focus on what you and the speaker have in common rather than focusing on what is different.

Break out of the "either-or," "black or white" mentality and look for bridges. Assume that you and the speaker have at least one thing in common - a goal, a characteristic or a concern - and build on that.

2. Imagine yourself calm and relaxed.

Create a mental picture of a time in your past when you felt great, and see that picture in detail. When you find yourself in the position of overreacting to someone's message, simply visualize that positive experience. It will create an internal, calming effect in you.

3. Delay your over-reaction.

Count to 10, or pause and take in a slow, deep breath. The deeper you make the breath, the more tension you will be able to release.

4. Listen with empathy.

Concentrate on understanding and feeling what the other person is feeling, from their point of view. Demonstrate your understanding and validate the other person's feelings. If you can do so with sincerity, offer comments like, "I appreciate how you feel..." and "I understand your feelings..."

5. Evaluate all ideas expressed without regard to ownership.

Focus on the content. Evaluate that content by itself rather than associating it with the person expressing it.

R3: Resolve

Once you have recognized your brewing emotional reaction and you have redirected that negative energy, you now try to resolve the situation and thus maintain emotional control.

1. Continue to acknowledge the other person and allow that person to vent - to "get it all off their chest."

2. Ask for some kind of advice.

If you were a customer service representative, you might ask an unhappy customer, "What would you do if you were in my position?"

3. Look for at least one positive outcome.

Look for one positive aspect of the interaction or the confrontation in this emotional situation and feed it back to the other person.

4. Conduct a debriefing with yourself.

Once your conversation is over, and you are more relaxed, try to determine specifically what caused your emotional reaction. Not only will you learn more about yourself, but you are more likely to be able to exercise emotional control in similar, future circumstances.

Finding Our Personal Blind Spots

For each category below, jot down what typically annoys, angers or triggers you in some fashion, even though your reaction in some of the categories may not be a strong one.

Accent/Style of speech: _____

Style/Manner of dress: _____

Hair "style": _____

Joke reference: _____

Personality characteristic: _____

Specific words (try to identify two or three): _____

Next, for each of the cultural/occupational types below, write the **first** adjective that comes to your mind.

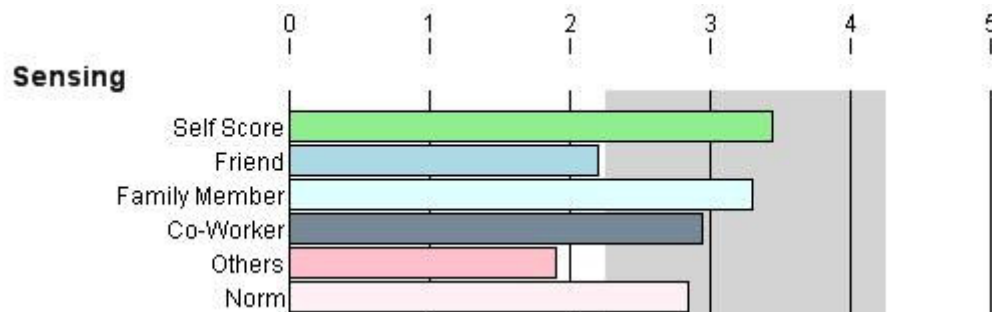
Boxer: _____
New Yorker: _____
Salesperson: _____
Fitness instructor: _____
Southern Californian: _____
Lawyer: _____

Now, review your responses. Many of the things that annoy or trigger you are based on stereotypes. They consequently represent important first reactions that can, if permitted, color your first impressions and receptivity to the messages of individual people.

Sensing

Here is your overall score for Sensing topic and your scores for each individual Sensing question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 54



As you walk quickly toward the conference room, you realize that you may be a minute or two late for the 2:00 meeting. You open the door and your boss who is to conduct the meeting, says, "Look who's here!"

From the *written* words above, can you tell just how your boss was feeling about your arrival? Was she annoyed? Grateful? Disgusted? Miffed? Happy?

Just knowing what words were spoken, you're not able to tell *how* your boss is feeling. You need more information. The information you need - and use - in this situation, as in many situations, is the information you get from *sensing* how a person feels. Sensing refers to the ability to perceive messages sent *vocally* and *visually* as well as verbally. We respond to the gestures of others based on a preconscious understanding of the "secret" code of non-verbal communication - the *vocal* and *visual* messages sent by those speaking.

Researchers in the area of non-verbal communication claim that as much as 90% of the meaning transmitted between two people in face-to-face communication can come via non-verbal channels. As such, only 10% of the meaning we derive from others comes through words alone. If these figures are even close to reality, then the importance of our non-verbal communication is overwhelming.

A plethora of courses and seminars are available to teach us how to write and speak better, but relatively few are offered in non-verbal communication. This section will give you a guide to developing a better understanding of non-verbal communication techniques.

Sigmund Freud, an early believer in the utility of body language, distrusted the spoken word and based much of his work on the assumption that words hide more than they reveal. Freud believed, as do many researchers, that although we cannot always rely on the truth of words, non-verbal behavior often does project truth.

Body Language

The concept of body language - the visual part of non-verbal communication - is certainly not new. People have known about it and have used it since the beginning of time. Before people developed language as a communication tool, they used body language to make their needs and desires known to others. Also known as kinesics, body language describes human interaction beyond the use of written and spoken words. This broad definition encompasses everything from the most subtle raising of an eyebrow to the precise movements of the sophisticated sign language used by the deaf.

Some non-verbal gestures are universally symbolic. The chair at the head of the table has long been reserved for the leader of the group. More recently, this position of honor has also been extended to the host of the table. The "hands above the head" has long symbolized surrender and submission.

Sometimes, gestures are more expressive than words. Conjure up the image of a person slapping his forehead, accompanied by an audible groan. Even without the groan, don't you already know that he has remembered something he was supposed to do? Implicit in this gesture is a rebuke to himself for his oversight.

Other well-known gestures are saluting, tipping one's hat, shaking hands, shrugging shoulders, waving good-bye, forming an "O" with thumb and forefinger, and blowing a kiss.

Non-verbal communication is stimulated by a subconscious need to express inner feelings and can be more reliable, even when it contradicts, verbal communication.

Body language involves the listener's interpretation of many kinds of gestures made by the speaker's eyes, face, hands, arms, legs, and posture. You can glean a considerable amount of information about others simply by noting body gestures. However, each isolated gesture is like an isolated word in a sentence. It is difficult and dangerous to interpret the gesture by itself or out of context. It takes more than one gesture to provide full meaning. Consequently, you should consider the gesture in light of everything else that's going on around you. When individual body language gestures are combined in clusters, they give a more complete and exact meaning of what the other person is feeling or thinking.

Before looking at some of the attitudes and meanings projected by clusters of gestures, consider some of the more common interpretations of individual gestures.

Interpreting individual gestures

Begin with the eyes.

The expressions, "shifty eyes," "beady eyes," and "steely eyes," demonstrate the awareness people have of this area of body language. It's a long-held belief that the honest person has a tendency to look another person straight in the eye when speaking. People tend to avoid eye contact when an uncomfortable question is asked. Consequently, it's wise to steer clear of topics that result in the avoidance of eye contact.

Facial expressions sometimes betray emotions.

"You can read her face like an open book" is a common statement used to describe a person whose facial expressions are very demonstrative. However, if someone is described as having a "poker face," he apparently attempts to keep others from knowing his true emotions.

Gestures made by the hands are also important to watch.

Tightly clenched hands or wringing hands usually indicate that the person is tense and experiencing undue pressure. Such a person will probably be preoccupied and difficult to relate to. Steepling, which is the joining of the fingers together, forming what might be described as a "church steeple," indicates smugness or great self confidence. Superiority and authority are usually indicated when the hands are joined together behind one's head or neck.

Tightly crossed arms tend to signal defensiveness.

Conversely, arms that are extended outward generally indicate openness and acceptance.

Tightly crossed legs tend to signal disagreement.

If people have tightly crossed legs and arms, their inner attitude is usually one of extreme negativity toward what is going on around them. As long as they are in this position, it is unlikely you will gain their full agreement with whatever you are saying or doing.

Watch a person's posture as well.

A person sitting with a leg over the arm of a chair usually signals an uncooperative attitude. Someone sitting with a chair back facing forward and straddling the seat with his arms on the chair back tends to express such attitudes as dominance and superiority. A person sitting with her legs crossed with the elevated foot moving in a slightly circular motion indicates boredom or impatience. A person's interest and involvement are usually projected by sitting on the edge of a chair and leaning slightly forward.

Common Gesture Clusters

Any individual gesture does not project the "total picture." But interpreting gesture clusters - the combination or grouping of individual gestures ensures a more meaningful analysis of the speaker's state of mind, if they are in harmony with the other messages being sent by the speaker. In other words, all the individual gestures must fit together to project a common, unified message. When they do not, you are faced with incongruity. Let's examine some of the more common gesture clusters and their associated meanings.

Openness - Several gestures indicate openness and sincerity, such as open hands, unbuttoned coat or unbuttoned collar, removing one's coat or jacket, moving closer together, leaning slightly forward in the chair, and uncrossed arms and legs.

Defensiveness - Defensiveness is usually projected by a rigid body, rigid or tightly crossed arms or legs, eyes glancing sideways or darting occasionally, minimal eye contact, lips pursed, fists clenched, and downcast head. Be especially aware of tightly clenched fists - they show that the other person is really turned off.

Evaluation - These gestures suggest that the other person is considering what you are saying, sometimes in a friendly way - sometimes unfriendly. Typical evaluation gestures include the tilted head, hand to cheek, leaning forward, and chin stroking. Sometimes evaluation gestures take on a critical aspect. In this case, the body is usually more drawn back, the hand is to the face, but the chin is in the palm of the hand with one finger going up the cheek and the other fingers positioned below the mouth.

Self-Conflict - This is usually expressed by a person pinching the bridge of his nose or closing his eyes, and slumping his head down slightly. He is probably trying to decide if he's in a bad situation or not. Don't try to reason him out of it, give him time.

Negative Evaluation - Dropping your eyeglasses to the lower bridge of the nose and peering over them is projecting a negative evaluation. Suspicion, secrecy, rejection, and doubt are typically communicated by sideways glances, minimal or no eye contact, shifting the body away from the speaker, and touching or rubbing the bridge of the nose frequently.

Readiness - Communicates dedication to a goal. It's usually communicated by placing the hands on the hips or sitting forward at the edge of a chair.

Boredom or Impatience - These are usually conveyed by the drumming of fingers, cupping the head in the palm of the hand, foot-swinging, brushing or picking at lint, doodling, pointing the body toward an exit, or looking at a watch or looking at the exit.

Observe the changes

In addition to observing gesture clusters, be watchful for changes in the gestures themselves which can indicate important changes in attitudes. For example:

Positive Change	Negative Change
Relaxing	Tensing
Increased eye contact	Decreased eye contact
Leaning forward	Leaning away
Uncrossing arms, legs	Crossing arms, legs
Matching body position and gestures with another person's	Fidgeting
Smiling	Frowning

Interpreting body language helps us understand the total message, but it's an inexact science. Although gesture clusters may be clues to the attitudes and emotions of another person, they do not provide conclusive evidence. As an active listener, be sure to verify through your *total* reception of a speaker's message.

Vocal Intonation

Your *total* reception of a speaker's message depends on not only the verbal - the words you hear - and the visual - the body language that you observe - but also on what you hear *behind* the words - the *vocal* part of the message heard through voice intonations. Voice intonation gives the vocal information; the words spoken give the verbal information. Added meaning can be added to the words spoken simply by changing voice intonation. Let's take a look at the seven major vocal qualities that affect voice intonations:

Resonance - The intensification and enrichment of the voice tone; ability of one's voice to fill space.

Rhythm - The flow, pace, and movement of the voice.

Speed - How fast or slow the voice is used.

Pitch - The tightening or relaxing of the vocal cords; the highness or the lowness of sound.

Volume - The degree of loudness or intensity of the voice.

Inflection - The changes in pitch or volume of the voice.

Clarity - The crisp articulation and enunciation of the words.

The way in which a person varies any or all of these seven vocal qualities in conversation can significantly change the feeling or emotion of the message being sent. By understanding and being aware of these vocal qualities and the emotions they project, you can respond appropriately to the silent messages communicated through vocal behavior.

A good example of the changes in meaning that can result from changes in voice qualities is an actor who verbalizes the word "Oh" eight different ways:

"Oh!" (*Exclamation* -- "Oh! I forgot to mail the check!")
"Oh!" (*Excitement* -- "Oh! Wow!")
"Oh?" (*Question* -- "Oh? Is that right?")
"Oh" (*Passion* -- "Oh ... I love opera.")
"Oh" (*Disgust* -- "Oh, not peas again!")
"Oh" (*Pain* -- "Oh, my arm hurts.")
"Oh" (*Disbelief* -- "Oh, yeah?")
"Oh" (*Boredom* -- "Oh. How interesting.")

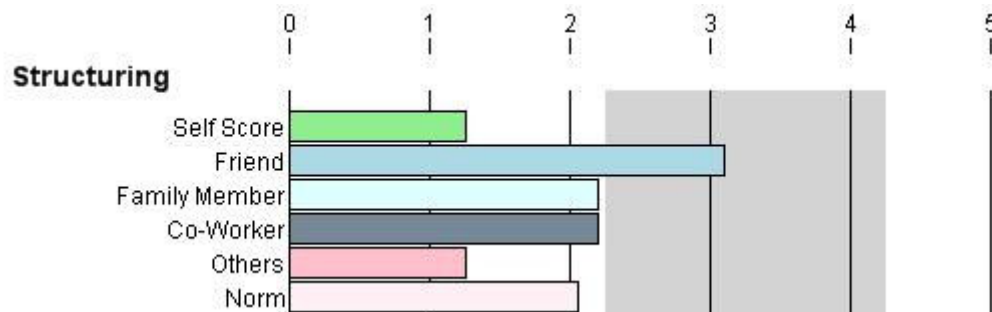
With simple changes in vocal qualities, eight unique emotions are conveyed. This simple two-letter word - "Oh" - demonstrates the importance of vocal intonation in communication.

In summary, Sensing - the fifth step in active listening - is hearing spoken messages through vocal and visual channels. Sensing in a very real sense is like learning another language - learning to "speak," use and understand *body* talk.

Structuring

Here is your overall score for Structuring topic and your scores for each individual Structuring question on the Listening360 online assessment:

Your Personal Score - 42



How often have you *listened* to someone, fully intending to listen carefully - you even took notes to be sure you remembered what the person had said - only to find that you remembered little? Even your notes were of little help because of significant gaps?

As diligent as you may have been in practicing the first five steps of the CARESS model of active listening, without the last step - Structuring - you may miss the key points of what a speaker wants you to hear and to know.

Structuring is listening primarily to the verbal component - the content - of someone's message. As we said earlier, there is a time gap created by the difference in speaking and listening speeds. We can use the surplus time to advantage by structuring the message we are listening to. The structuring process revolves around three primary activities - **indexing**, **sequencing**, and **comparing**.

Indexing

Indexing refers to taking mental or written notes of:

1. The topic or major idea.
2. The key points being discussed.
3. The reasons, sub-points, and/or supporting points and then,
4. Summarizing the information and checking the accuracy of the information.

This process is made easier by listening for transitional words. Transitional words are words and phrases like, "Well, what I want to talk to you about today is..." What follows such phrases is probably the main idea, the subject, or the topic. Also, "first," "second," "third," and "last" are transitional words that usually indicate key points. When people say things like, "For example," or "Let me elaborate on that," you know that a rationale, a sub-point, or a supporting point is likely to follow.

Sequencing

Sequencing is listening for order or priority. In some communications, the speaker is relaying information in which the order is important, or you are listening for instructions or directions in which the order is crucial. The order or sequence of events is sometimes suggested by the natural relation that one event has to another. For example, if you heard, "I ate the egg," "I fried the egg," and "I broke the egg," you would immediately recognize the correct sequence of the three events even if you heard them in reverse order.

With most messages, we have an opportunity to question the speaker and ask for the correct sequence. Listen for transitional words like, "first," "second," "third," etc. You can clarify your understanding with such leads as, "Let me make sure I understand the order in which things should be done," or "Let me make sure I understand what your priority concerns are." Feedback and clarification get the intended sequence.

Comparing

Comparing is the third component of structuring a message. To effectively organize the contents of a message, you have to concentrate on the points that the speaker is making so that you can discriminate between fact and theory, positive and negative attitudes, actual and projected consequences, and advantages and disadvantages. As you listen, you will be involved in a continual process of comparing ideas, options, attitudes, facts, feelings and beliefs.

Some speakers organize their messages using the "good/bad news" approach, hoping that the listener will accept the comparisons as made. Other speakers will present only one side of the issue, leaving you to fill in the other side for yourself. As active listeners, we compare similarities and differences, facts and theory, pros and cons, and all the contents of a message that can be categorized in a comparative analysis. In applying this skill, we follow a familiar model:

1. Identify key points.

Identify the key points of the speaker's message; this is similar to indexing.

2. Compare. Point out the differences.

Note which points are facts vs. theories or opinions; pros vs. cons; etc. Also be alert for subtle techniques used to sway the listener's thinking.

3. Question.

If you can, question in order to verify the noted differences.

4. Sum up and check back.

Summarize your understanding of the basic message.

YOUR STRENGTH AREAS - This section gives you a snapshot of the five questions with the highest average scores (from highest to lowest) from all your raters combined.

Questions Relating to Strengths	Average
5. While listening, I respond to the speaker with phrases such as "I understand," "I see," "hmm," "yes," "really," and "tell me more."	3.25
13. I objectively listen to everything a person has to say without jumping to subjective conclusions.	3.00
18. I read the speaker's body language, as well as listen to their words, to better interpret what they are telling me.	2.62
3. When someone wants to talk with me, I put aside and turn away from what I am doing (reading, writing, telephone) and give my full attention and eye contact to the speaker.	2.38
23. When I listen to a speaker's message, I try to discriminate between fact and fiction, positive and negative attitudes, assumptions versus reality, etc.	2.38

YOUR IMPROVEMENT AREAS - This section gives you a snapshot of the five questions with the lowest average scores (from lowest to highest) from all your raters combined.

Questions Relating to Areas of Improvement	Average
24. After listening to others, I feed back to them their major ideas, key points, supporting points and priorities, to their satisfaction.	1.12
9. When I want more detail about what the speaker has said, I ask open-ended questions such as, "Tell me more about that?" or "Then what?" or "How would that work?"	1.25
22. I take written notes, when appropriate, to ensure that I remember necessary details, instructions and deadlines.	1.38
14. I avoid pre-judging a speaker's message based on things such as their accent, clothing, hair style or their other idiosyncrasies.	1.50
11. I give the person I am speaking with appropriate feedback during a conversation by paraphrasing, in my own words, the speaker's message.	1.62

YOUR BLIND SPOTS - This section gives you a snapshot of the five questions with the greatest difference between your scores and the average scores from all your raters combined. A + sign means you scored yourself lower than the raters (good!). A - sign means you scored yourself higher than the raters (not good).

Questions Relating to Blind Spots	Average
14. I avoid pre-judging a speaker's message based on things such as their accent, clothing, hair style or their other idiosyncrasies.	-2.50
23. When I listen to a speaker's message, I try to discriminate between fact and fiction, positive and negative attitudes, assumptions versus reality, etc.	+2.38
19. I pay attention to the changes in the speaker's body language and vocal inflection, which may indicate important changes in their feelings and emotions about what they are saying to me.	-2.25
10. When I am unclear or unsure of what the speaker has said, I ask clarifying questions, such as "Can you give me an example of that?" or "What exactly do you mean by...?"	+2.12
15. I make a conscious attempt to listen without letting my personal feelings toward the speaker influence my impression of their	+2.12

message.	
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Questions	Category	# of responses	Average within category
Concentrating			
1. I avoid letting external distractions, such as noises, odors and visual distractions, take my attention away from what someone is saying to me.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 0.00	2.00 1.50 2.00 2.50 2.00 0.00
2. I ignore my personal internal distractions (boredom, daydreaming, fatigue, physical discomfort) in order to pay full attention to the speaker.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 0.75	1.00 1.00 3.00 1.00 2.00 0.75
3. When someone wants to talk with me, I put aside and turn away from what I am doing (reading, writing, telephone) and give my full attention and eye contact to the speaker.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 1.38	1.00 2.00 2.00 2.50 3.00 1.38
4. I actively create a receptive listening environment - a place that has few distractions - when it is necessary that I focus my full attention on listening.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 -0.12	2.00 2.00 2.00 1.50 2.00 -0.12
Acknowledging			
5. While listening, I respond to the speaker with phrases such as "I understand," "I see," "hmm," "yes," "really," and "tell me more."	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 0.25	3.00 3.50 3.50 3.00 3.00 0.25
6. I hold my comments until there is a natural pause in the conversation; I don't interrupt.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 -1.88	4.00 2.00 2.50 1.50 2.50 -1.88
7. While listening, I use gestures such as smiling, nodding, appropriate facial expressions, and body language to let the speaker know that I am listening.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 -1.25	3.00 3.00 2.00 0.50 1.50 -1.25
8. I demonstrate to others that I am listening by maintaining a level of eye contact that is comfortable to the speaker.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 1.00	1.00 0.50 3.00 3.00 1.50 1.00
Researching & Responding			
9. When I want more detail about what the speaker has said, I ask open-ended questions such as, "Tell me more about that?" or "Then what?" or "How would that work?"	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 -0.75	2.00 0.50 2.00 2.00 0.50 -0.75

10. When I am unclear or unsure of what the speaker has said, I ask clarifying questions, such as "Can you give me an example of that?" or "What exactly do you mean by...?"	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	0.00 1.50 3.50 2.50 1.00 2.12
11. I give the person I am speaking with appropriate feedback during a conversation by paraphrasing, in my own words, the speaker's message.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	2.00 1.50 1.00 2.50 1.50 -0.38
12. In demonstrating that I understood what the speaker said, I "reflect back" (not "repeat back"), in my own words, my understanding of their message and ask if I have summarized it correctly.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	1.00 3.00 2.00 1.50 1.50 1.00

Exercising Emotional Control

13. I objectively listen to everything a person has to say without jumping to subjective conclusions.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	3.00 4.00 1.50 3.50 3.00 0.00
14. I avoid pre-judging a speaker's message based on things such as their accent, clothing, hair style or their other idiosyncrasies.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	4.00 1.50 1.50 0.00 3.00 -2.50
15. I make a conscious attempt to listen without letting my personal feelings toward the speaker influence my impression of their message.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	0.00 2.00 0.00 2.50 4.00 2.12
16. I make a strong effort to understand the speaker's message even when I disagree with what they are saying.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	2.00 1.00 3.00 1.00 3.00 0.00

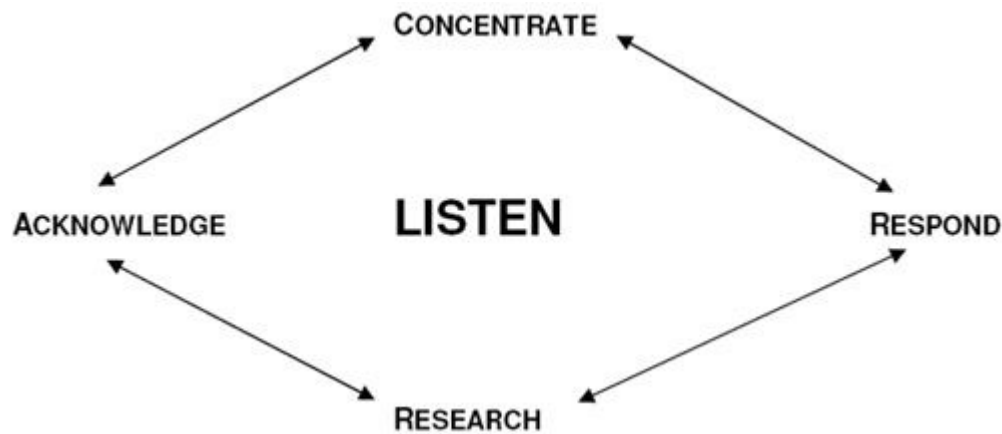
Sensing

17. I listen to the speaker's vocal inflection (the way they say their words) to better understand their intent, as well as the content, of their message.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	3.00 1.50 3.00 1.50 3.00 -0.75
18. I read the speaker's body language, as well as listen to their words, to better interpret what they are telling me.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2 2	1.00 2.50 3.00 3.00 2.00 1.62
19. I pay attention to the changes in the speaker's body language and vocal inflection, which may indicate important changes in their feelings and emotions	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others	1 2 2 2 2	4.00 1.00 3.00 2.00 1.00

about what they are saying to me.	Variance		-2.25
20. I am attentive to a speaker's sense of time and urgency and I speed up or slow down my pace to meet their needs.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2	3.00 2.00 1.50 3.00 0.00 -1.38
Structuring			
21. I take mental notes when listening to help me determine the speaker's priorities or sequence of events.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2	2.00 3.50 2.50 2.00 0.50 0.12
22. I take written notes, when appropriate, to ensure that I remember necessary details, instructions and deadlines.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2	1.00 2.50 1.00 1.50 0.50 0.38
23. When I listen to a speaker's message, I try to discriminate between fact and fiction, positive and negative attitudes, assumptions versus reality, etc.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2	0.00 3.00 2.00 3.00 1.50 2.38
24. After listening to others, I feed back to them their major ideas, key points, supporting points and priorities, to their satisfaction.	Self Friend Family Member Co-Worker Others Variance	1 2 2 2 2	1.00 1.00 1.50 0.50 1.50 0.12

Pulling It All Together

Listening is the silent skill of success in the people business. It's the missing link in communication. The most persuasive salespeople, the most effective leaders and skilled parents tend to be the best listeners. So let's pull it all together with a process for listening that you can put into practice starting today. This model was developed by Steve Shapiro in his book, *Listening for Success*.



CONCENTRATE - Paying Attention

The first key to effective listening is to concentrate. Concentrate means to pay attention, and this is perhaps the most difficult element of effective listening. **Paying attention** is difficult. It takes practice. It's difficult because our minds are so easily distracted.

Two types of distractions-external and internal-prevent us from paying attention to the speaker. External distractions include noises, other people, telephones, or something about the person we're listening to -- the way they dress, or the way they talk, for example. Internal distractions make it even more difficult. Thinking about other things, thinking about what we're going to say next, jumping to conclusions, mind-reading, and making assumptions about the speaker's meaning, all get in the way of true communication.

Listening requires intense **attention**. If you have something on your mind that prohibits you from concentrating on the speaker, see if you can call a time out. Tell the speaker that now is not a good time because you are preoccupied and you want to listen later when you can give them the attention they deserve. This is always better than trying to fake listening. You cannot fake listening.

To give the gift of listening we must train ourselves to let go of distractions and to pay attention. We must be present. We need to care enough to slow down and get ourselves out of the way. We need to care enough to pause.

The more you practice this the better you get, just like any skill. I have also found that it has a powerful effect on the other people. They begin to open up and to share more of themselves. New levels of trust and rapport develop. It makes them feel important.

Do this one thing the next time someone talks to you: **pay attention**. Concentrate. Then concentrate some more. Practice and never stop practicing. You will get better, and it will transform your communication.

An important aspect of concentrating is exercising **emotional control**. Emotional control means becoming conscious of our filters, blind spots, and habitual reactions to the things other people say and do. It requires that you take personal responsibility for your own emotions instead of blaming them on others. You work on understanding your emotional reactions and managing them. In this way, you eventually learn to choose your responses instead of allowing others to choose them for you. Automatically you become a better communicator, one who gets results with and through others.

The skill of **structuring** is another aspect of concentrating. When you concentrate fully on what the other person is saying and you listen for the message behind the message; when you fully engage in the conversation and notice the speaker's body language and facial expressions, you begin to automatically structure the speaker's message. You listen for what is most important to them and you gain an ability to reflect back to the person an accurate summary of their message.

As you can see, **concentrating** is the most important skill of listening and communication. Without it the other elements are nearly useless. How can you acknowledge and research and respond effectively if you haven't first concentrated fully on the speaker?

Acknowledge--*Showing You've concentrated*

The next key is to **acknowledge**. When you acknowledge what the other person has said it shows concern and respect for the speaker. It will prove that you are a responsive and caring person. Another word for acknowledge is empathize. We empathize with the speaker acknowledging their position. It doesn't mean we agree with them. It does mean we understand them. We are beginning to understand the speaker's meaning and feelings behind the meaning. Acknowledging reduces friction and resistance and helps to create a climate of trust and rapport.

At first, this step may seem easy. It is simple, but it is not easy. When I teach listening skills, it often takes up to two hours for people to put it into practice. Please do not underrate this step. Think about it. Visualize yourself doing it. Then try it right away.

There are many ways to acknowledge the speaker. One of the best is simply to pause when the speaker has finished. Remember, in communication it's the little things that make the big difference.

You may have noticed that most people begin responding right away, sometimes before the last word has left your lips. Sometimes they interrupt you. What message does this send? It says that they haven't listened to you. They've been formulating their response while you were talking. So just pause, and look the person in the eye. Pause for two to four seconds. I call this the Golden Silence. What message does this send? It says, "What you've said is important enough for me to reflect upon before I respond. I have listened, and now I'm considering what you mean."

Pausing often feels uncomfortable at first. We're not used to silence in communication. A great way to pause is simply to take a deep breath. It's impossible to talk and take a deep breath at the same time.

Another method is to give the speaker what I call verbal pauses. When they finish speaking, simply say, "I see," or "Oh," or "Ahh, or "Umm." This one little step can transform the communication process. Why? Because it proves to the speaker that you are listening. It forces you to slow down and pay attention. It feels good to you and to the speaker. It will help you to share meaning and gain understanding. Try it! Don't overlook this step. Just try it out ten times and decide for yourself if it works for you.

As you improve your skill, try acknowledging the emotional message that the person is sending. This is more challenging. But if you want someone to feel truly understood, then you must listen for and acknowledge their feelings. Here are some examples:

"It sounds like you're really upset about this."

"I sense some hesitation in your response."

"You must feel hurt by that."

"You're raising an important issue."

"I'm glad you brought this up."

"It must hurt to be treated that way."

"You've had other experiences with people that make you leery."

"It looks like you're feeling unsure about this."

Here's an example. Let's say that Mark gets a letter in the mail and the return address shows a woman's name. Mark's wife gets the mail that day, and stomping into the house, yells,

"What's this?!!"

"It's a letter," Mark yells back, "What's your problem?!!"

"Who is this woman?" she screams. "I want to know who this woman is!"

"It's from my client, Susan Smith! Get off my back!"

What do you notice about this conversation? Did Mark acknowledge her? No, he did not. First of all, he didn't pause. He just reacted. She yelled and he yelled right back. That's useless. The smart thing to do, what mature communicators do, is to acknowledge the emotional message, even in difficult situations like this one. Let's let Mark try again:

"What's this?!!!"

(Pause, breathe!) "Wow. It sounds like you're really frustrated."

At this point, she is likely to respond in one of two ways. If Mark's perception is on track, she might say, "You're damn right I'm frustrated!" On the other hand, if Mark's perception is off-track, she might respond with, "No, I'm not frustrated, I'm angry!"

"I can see that! What the heck has got you so angry? Tell me about it." Now the conversation has the possibility to move in an entirely new direction.

It doesn't really matter if Mark is right or not about his perception. The point is that he's acknowledging what he perceives from his wife. This gives the speaker the chance to affirm or correct the listener's perception. Either way, it begins the process of defusing friction, tension, and resistance.

Sometimes the speaker won't calm down right away. It might take two or three acknowledges before she realizes that someone is actually listening. Some people get so shocked by this realization that they forget what upset them in the first place! Listening transforms the communication process.

Researching - Gaining Clarity

In order to give people an intelligent and effective response, we must first clarify what the speaker means. To research means to clarify: to make transparent, unclouded, distinct, sharp. It means to illuminate. We clarify to get on the same wavelength and to gain a sense of shared meaning. The response we want when we clarify what the other person means is, "Yes, that's it!" or "You've got it!"

The biggest mistakes made in communication, both personally and professionally, stem from poor listening. When we fail to listen carefully, we often make costly, yet avoidable errors. For example, what if someone you are trying to do business with says . . .

Prospect: "How long have you been in this business?"

Salesperson: "Six months."

Prospect: "No thanks. I'm not interested."

Look at the graphic of Listening model. Of the four elements to the model, which one did the salesperson jump to? Did they acknowledge? No. Did they clarify? No. They jumped right to respond. And that's what gets us into trouble! Jumping to a response before we've acknowledged and clarified often leads to frustrating communication problems. Let's try another example, this time using the acknowledge and clarify elements.

Prospect: "How long have you been in this business?"

Salesperson: "That's an interesting question (acknowledge). Can you tell me why that's important to you? (research)"

Prospect: "Well, I don't want to get involved in something that's unproved."

Salesperson: "I see. (acknowledge) You're only interested in solutions that have a proven track record. (research)"

Prospect: That's right. I'm not the type for bleeding edge technology...

Salesperson: "What would you like to see to be convinced that this is a proven solution? (respond)"

Prospect: "Well, I'd like to speak with three of your customers who've been successful with your company's product."

Salesperson: "Great. I can do that (acknowledge). When would you like me to set that up?" (respond)

You probably noticed that the prospect didn't really care how long the salesperson had been in the business. In the first example, the salesperson responded to the presenting message and by doing so, shot themselves in the foot. In the second example, by acknowledging and researching, he listened for the message behind the message, discovered the prospect's true concern, and responded in a way that got positive results.

Another thing you may have noticed is that it takes a little more effort. It takes asking intelligent questions, like a detective, a doctor, or a therapist might ask. I'll say it again, listening is requires effort, but the payoff is worth it every time.

We research, or clarify, by asking open questions. Open questions are the key to effective listening. They prevent us from making assumptions. Here are some examples of open questions:

"Tell me more."
"Can you tell me more?"
"How do you mean?"
"Can you tell me more about your concern?"
"I'd like to better understand before I respond. Can you elaborate?"
"I'd like to understand your frustration. What else is troubling you?"
"So, your concern is . . ."

Seeking clarity allows you to gain understanding, to see the world from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to her. If you can see the world through Joe Jones eyes, you can sell Joe Jones what Joe Jones buys.

Before we respond to the speaker's concern, we need to understand the concern. That's why we need to look beneath the surface with listening skills. It gives us a better chance to respond in a way that respects the speaker, proves that we care, and greatly increases the probability that we can help them overcome their resistance.

Responding

Now it's time to respond. If you're not careful, you might go right from **concentrate** to **respond**, *skipping the important processes of acknowledging and clarifying*. Responding too quickly is a tough habit to break. Concentrate, Acknowledge, Research, and then Respond.

When we understand what a person means we can feel confident that we will give a better response. Realize that you don't always need to have an answer. You can never have all the answers, but you can always give a response.

Responding is the easy part when we've really listened. We can:

- provide a solution or an answer, when it's appropriate
- provide resources
- agree to take action
- invite them to a meeting
- educate them
- give them a tape, article, or book
- suggest options and alternatives, or that the speaker find solutions or return with options

- put the ball back in their court
 - "What do you suggest?"
 - "What do you plan to do about it?"
 - "This sounds like something you need to handle. I'll support you however I can."

If you can respond in 20 words, don't use 50. It's better to say too little than too much. When you say too little, if the other person is interested, they will ask for more information.

The skills of the Listening360 Model are now yours to use . . . or are they? Although the skills are relatively simple to learn and may appear simple to use, implementing them may be a more difficult task. Applying these skills means breaking through a barrier of poor listening habits that most of us have developed and used over a lifetime.

Creating and exercising an *active* listening attitude can help you tremendously. Exercising an *Active Listening Attitude* means:

1. Understanding that listening is as powerful as speech.

What - and how - someone says to you is just as critical as what you have to say to them.

2. Realizing that listening saves time, because...

People who listen tend to make fewer mistakes, create fewer interpersonal misunderstandings, experience less employee and customer turnover, and initiate fewer false starts.

3. Understanding that listening to EVERYONE is important and worthwhile.

Approach listening with a new enthusiasm. Look for that something you can learn from each and every person you meet - focus on the substance and the meaning of the message that people are sending rather than on the mechanics or the style of their delivery.

*Listening is **wanting** to hear.* Unless you are motivated to listen, everything discussed in this report is meaningless. When you make active listening (which is psychological caressing) an all-the-time behavior, it will bring you an abundance of benefits:

- When you listen to others, they will reciprocate by listening to you.
- People will think more favorably of you.
- Both the personal and professional parts of your life will improve.
- You will experience fewer communication glitches.
- Your relationships will improve.
- Productivity and morale will go up in your work environment.

The payoffs for improving your listening skills and becoming an active listener are enormous!

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