

The

# Power of Listening

eWORKBOOK

**How to Communicate Effectively with Anyone**



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# The Power Of Listening

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# Chapter One

# The Power of Listening:

## Overview

Listening – we do it constantly. So why must we go through a workbook 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 don't feel their managers listen to their needs, suggestions or complaints

Ineffective listening is also acknowledged to be one of the primary contributors to divorce and the inability of a parent and child to openly communicate.

And, finally, 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? Here are a few reasons:

### 1. The Hard Work

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. As a result, most people just don't do it.

### 2. The 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 we deem irrelevant. Sometimes we also screen out things that are important to us.

### 3. The Rush to Action

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

### 4. The 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. The Lack of Training

We do more listening than speaking, reading, or writing, yet we receive almost no formal education in listening. In fact, the average student gets less than one-half year of listening education through her 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 percent. Today, more and more companies are discovering that one bad listener within the managerial ranks can cause much more damage than a number of good listeners can correct.

The normal, untrained listener is likely to understand and retain only about 50 percent of a conversation, and this relatively poor percentage drops to an even less impressive 25 percent 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 – listening actively – 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 psychological reciprocity – "If you listen to me, I'll listen to you."

What are the benefits of active listening for you?

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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 secret to improving your listening skills? To listen effectively, you must CARESS those you're listening to. The CARESS Model

CARESS – these letters represent the six steps that, when followed, will help you become an active listener:

- C** **Concentrate** – focus your attention on the speaker and only on the speaker.
- A** **Acknowledge** – acknowledge your speaker by demonstrating your interest and attention.
- R** **Research** – gather information about your speaker through the skillful use of questions and statements.
- E** **Exercise 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** **Structure** – structure or organize the information you get through your listening, observation, and note taking.

*"We were born with two ears and two eyes and one mouth so that we could listen and observe much more than we talk."* (unknown)

## Personal Listening Profile

Before you begin working to improve your listening skills, let's first look at where you are at this moment in each of the key areas of the CARESS Model. Take a few minutes to respond to the questions below and on the next two pages. Your responses will help you determine what specific skills need improvement. Respond honestly to each of the items – no one is going to review or use this survey but you.

### You rate others' listening skills

Using a scale of 1-10 (10 being perfect), how would you rate the following people as listeners? After rating each person, identify one of the listening behaviors that led to your rating.

<b>Your immediate supervisor</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>A good friend</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Best listener you know</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Your spouse/partner</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Worst listener you know</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b> Yourself</b>	<hr/> <hr/>

### Others rate your listening skills

Using the same rating scale and descriptive technique, how would the following people rate and describe your listening skills?

<b>Your immediate supervisor</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>A good friend</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Best listener you know</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Your spouse/partner</b>	<hr/> <hr/>

## In Business

Name several business situations or circumstances in which you find it difficult to listen:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

List some of the impacts that result 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:

Your mind wandered as you were listening to someone you needed to pay attention to...

---

You tried to listen to someone while you were 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 or client because something was miscommunicated...

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### How often do you....?

Encourage the conversation and ensure that it will be a two-way flow of communication by asking open-ended questions, clarifying what you don't completely understand, and giving appropriate feedback?

Always              Often              Sometimes              Rarely              Never

Judge and respond to only the value of what is being said rather than the way and manner in which a person says it?

Always              Often              Sometimes              Rarely              Never

Try to read what's going on behind the person's spoken words by asking yourself what they might be feeling, why they are saying what they are saying, and what is implied by what they say?

Always              Often              Sometimes              Rarely              Never

Take mental or written notes of the major ideas, key points, and supporting points and/or reasons when listening to someone?

Always              Often              Sometimes              Rarely              Never

# Chapter Two

# Concentrating

How would you evaluate yourself as a listener most of the time in most situations? Are you an evaluative listener or truly an active listener? Or, might you be a marginal listener, or even sometimes a non-listener?

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. They remain emotionally detached from the conversation. They evaluate the message strictly on the basis of the words delivered, totally 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 most powerful 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 atten-

tion 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 must concentrate completely on the speaker, eliminating as many distractions as possible. These distraction – or barriers to listenin – fall into three major categories, each of which has negative effects on your listening and the communication process as a whole. The distractions are either External Environmental, External Speaker-related, or 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, his poor grooming, any disturbing mannerisms (such as a nervous twitch or the jiggling of change in a pocket), certain facial expressions or body language, or his 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, German, English and to some degree 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, and as you do, try to speak. It's 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."

Will Rogers once said, "I never met a man I didn't like." Although he may have actually met some people he didn't care for or with whom he had little in common, he always tried to focus on something about each person that he could like or did have in common. Consequently, when you feel yourself drifting away or tuning out, consciously make the decision to listen to that person and find that

thing you have in common or the thing(s) he is saying that you can learn from and use.

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

Mentally paraphrasing what the speaker is saying will prevent you from day-dreaming 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 – actively listen to them by completely concentrating on them:

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

*"We already know what we have to say, but what they have to say, we know not."* (unknown)

### **Exercise: Status of the Speaker**

Sometimes, our listening behaviors are responses to the status of a speaker. These psychological responses are difficult to analyze as they are affected by personal attitudes, biases, pre-judgments, cultural standards, and traditions.

Without analyzing your motives, feelings, or attitudes, indicate your view of the status of the people listed below.

**A = Higher status**

**B = Same status**

**C = Lower status**

**D = Not applicable**

#### **Your Personal Life**

- |                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| _____ Grandmother               |
| _____ Nephew                    |
| _____ Younger brother or sister |
| _____ Older brother or sister   |
| _____ Uncle                     |
| _____ Aunt                      |
| _____ Mother                    |
| _____ Son or daughter           |
| _____ Grandfather               |

#### **Your Professional Life**

- |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| _____ Receptionist                |
| _____ President of your company   |
| _____ Your attorney               |
| _____ Secretary                   |
| _____ A frequent customer         |
| _____ An occasional customer      |
| _____ Mail person                 |
| _____ Office supplies salesperson |
| _____ Computer technician         |

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# Chapter Three

# Acknowledging

Think for a moment of a person with whom you really enjoy sharing a conversation, or look forward to spending time talking with. It may be your spouse, a co-worker, a close friend – someone with whom you feel completely comfortable and can talk about practically anything.

Now think about why you enjoy talking with that person so much. Perhaps that person:

- often has stimulating comments to make
- is non-judgmental and takes everything you say as you mean it to be taken
- seems genuinely interested in what you are saying

These reasons are all important but – how does that person show interest? Most likely, that person consistently demonstrates interest both verbally and non-verbally throughout your conversations through acknowledgment.

In the context of active listening, acknowledging means that listeners give positive, observable, and frequently audible signs to the speaker that they are listening to, understanding, and appreciating what the speaker says.

As an active listener, your acknowledgment communicates an attitude of acceptance of the speaker as a worthwhile person. On the other hand, a lack of acknowledgment or negative acknowledging from the poor listener communicates disapproval and rejection, and weakens the relationship. Poor acknowledging can interrupt or end the communication process altogether.

## Check it out! Acknowledging Behaviors

Think again of that 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 you and what you are saying.

	Glances sideways.		Looks in your eyes.
	Sighs.		Touches your arm or hand.
	Crosses arms on chest.		Leans toward you.
	Leans away from you.		Smiles frequently.
	Stares.		Maintains a pleasant facial expression.
	Sneers.		Grins.
	Yawns.		Sits facing you directly.
	Frowns.		Nods head 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 expressive hand gestures while speaking.
	Jingles change or rattles keys.		Gives fast glances.
	Fidgets in chair.		Stretches.

Now, for a change, think of someone who 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?

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

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

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# Chapter Four

# Researching and Responding

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 in the informal atmosphere of two people engaged in 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.

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.

## Remember...

Concentration skills and techniques keep us focused on the speaker – they help us avoid or minimize external and internal distractions. Acknowledging the speaker through non-verbal body language and short verbal feedback lets the speaker know we are paying attention. Both skills support research and responding; the active listener demonstrates all of these practices simultaneously.

## **Researching – Using the Right Questions to Gather Information**

One of the most fundamental questioning techniques is to start with broad, open questions, then build 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, 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 to build on previous responses. 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. Not only that, if you have been acknowledging the speaker appropriately and been thoughtful with your questions and feedback, most speakers experience a higher sense of trust and willingness to share information. 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 not a question that will produce a meaningful answer. If you ask a two-part question, people tend to either answer only the second part or only the part that interested them or 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.

#### **A Tip**

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, the questions you use 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. Expansion questions allow the speaker to reply in whatever form, level of detail, and direction she likes. This type of open-ended 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.

## **Responding – 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 (as we discussed in the Acknowledging section), 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.

#### **Example:**

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

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

**Listener:** (Reflective verbal feedback) "You seem to be unhappy with the apparent lack of response from management on concerns voiced by the line 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 – as we discussed earlier.

### **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 right now, it won't get done?"

"Something seems to be bothering you about what I just 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.

*Everyone you meet knows something you don't know but need to know. Listen and learn from them.*  
(H. Jackson Brown, Jr.)

## First Conversation

The Speaker (S) has a problem. Read through the following conversation. Visualize and hear it in your mind.

S: You know, I'm feeling really depressed.  
L: What are you experiencing?  
S: I feel numb most of the time. I don't want to do much of anything.  
L: So you feel really low, like you have no energy?  
S: Yeah, I know I'm probably reacting to the divorce. It was finalized last week. But I don't feel much of anything.  
L: Hmmmm. (3-4 seconds of silence)  
S: I know we did the right thing – me and Jill. There's no doubt about that. But now I feel so empty.  
L: Going through a divorce is one of the toughest things a person can do. Do you feel you gave the marriage every chance you could?  
S: I think so. We were in counseling for the last two years. Even the counselor used the term "irreconcilable differences." I just feel so sad that it didn't work. We tried, but it didn't work.  
L: Hmm. Would you like to talk more about it?  
S: Not really. I need to get on with my life.  
L: Got any plans? I hope you're thinking about taking care of yourself while your heart is on the mend.  
S: Well, there are a few things on my calendar.  
L: Like what?  
S: A long weekend in Santa Fe. Maybe a concert or two.  
L: Good for you! And I know how you like to hear jokes. I just heard a new one. Wanna hear it?  
S: Sure.  
L: What did the painter say to the wall?  
S: What?  
L: One more crack like that and I'll plaster you!  
S: (Both laugh) My 10-year old will love that one!

**Identify three ways this listener demonstrated active listening:**

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## A Second Conversation

Beth, who's been on the job only two weeks at a fast food outlet, is talking to her manager, Bill.

- Beth:** I know I'm supposed to watch the drive-in window for customers and cover the inside as well, right?
- Bill:** That's right. You're the newest employee, and we always put the newest person on the drive-in window.
- Beth:** Okay, but does that mean I have to work harder than everyone else?
- Bill:** (slight pause) I'm getting the impression you think something's not right here. I expect you to work just as hard as everyone else. You have to hustle.
- Beth:** I do, I do. But when I'm serving someone at the counter and then someone drives up to the window, how do I handle both?
- Bill:** We're all supposed to be watching the window too. If you can't handle it, someone else should step in.
- Beth:** That's what I thought. But no one else "steps in." I have to hurry up and finish at the counter and then do the window. No one else seems to help. I don't think it's fair.
- Bill:** So you think you're doing more than your fair share?
- Beth:** It seems like it. I don't know what my "fair share" is yet, but I see people standing around and talking while I'm hustling as fast as I can.
- Bill:** I know you hustle, Beth, and I can feel that you're frustrated about whether you're being taken advantage of. Do you think you are?
- Beth:** I'm beginning to think so.
- Bill:** How about if I watch more carefully for the next day or so before I say anything? If your feelings are accurate about other people not doing their share of the workload, I'll step in and say something.
- Beth:** I appreciate it, Bill.

In this conversation, what are two things you noticed about Bill's use of feedback?

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 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 in to work again!"

**Tentative Statement:**

---

---

**Feeling Statement:**

---

---

**Situational Context:**

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---

(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:**

---

---

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# Chapter Five

## Exercising Emotional Control

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 being conscious of our filters and blind spots, understanding them and controlling them. Normally we aren't consciously aware of how our past experiences influence our present behavior, even though intellectually we accept this fact. 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, task versus relationship orientation, 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. On the other hand, wearing a high-powered three-piece suit for some types of business appointments in rural areas might put a rural businessperson on the defensive against a not-to-be-trusted "city slicker."

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 often cause severe emotional over-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

Less experienced listeners tend to focus on the mechanics, the style and the delivery of a speaker's message rather than grasping the overall message, the true substance of what is being said. If we are going to be truly active listeners, we must learn to exercise emotional control so we don't block or bias the true meaning of the speaker's message. (Sometimes, just one word can catch us.) 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

First you must recognize – and admit – that a strong emotional reaction is brewing. How can you recognize an emotional reaction developing? One or more of the following may occur:

- 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

Any of these responses function like negative energy in the communication process. Once you recognize a strong emotional reaction brewing, you must redirect that negative energy. There are several techniques you can try; each may be appropriate in different situations:

#### 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, characteristic or 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.

#### 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. Be empathic.

Listen with empathy. Concentrate on understanding and feeling what the other person is feeling. See the situation 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.

Exercising emotional control when trying to listen – to actively listen – is sometimes a real challenge. But the benefits you achieve are considerable and worth the effort.

*Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or self-confidence. (Robert Frost)*

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue I**

**Julio:** We had this breakthrough in the design of the laser drill two days ago. Now we should be able to make, if not beat, our development timeline, but we need another piece of equipment to help us out.

**Roger:** More equipment? That means more money. You guys have already gone over budget and you're not done yet.

**Julio:** Look, there's no way you can budget for something like this in advance and know all it's going to take. We're not spending money wildly. We want to beat LaserTech. Everybody knows the first company to market wins the lion's share of customers for this drill.

**Roger:** But what's it costing us? I want you to meet the deadline without spending more money.

**Julio:** If we had that new caliper you and I saw at the Electronics Show last month, we'd be on our way to the finish line.

**Roger:** That thing costs five to seven thousand dollars. No way we're going to waste more money on this project.

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue II**

**Diane:** It's happened so many times that I'm thinking of leaving the group.

**Cindy:** You're really considering leaving the group?

**Diane:** Well, I'm close to it. I just don't want to be criticized all the time. I want to be able to talk about what's going on in my relationship with Jeff and not feel like I'm being judged.

**Cindy:** Diane, I don't have the impression that anybody's criticizing you, or judging your relationship with Jeff. I think we all realize how hard you're trying to make it work.

**Diane:** Yeah, and offering advice all the time on how I shouldn't take his verbal abuse, and stand up for myself and be assertive and all that.

**Cindy:** When that subject comes up I think the rest of us are trying to be supportive of what you're saying. You talk about wanting to be able to stick up for yourself, so we're trying to stand behind you.

**Diane:** Easy for you to say. You're married to that wimp George who's afraid to say a word to you for fear you'll leave him.

## **Questions**

For each of the dialogues, identify the words or phrases that might be considered trigger words – words that could trigger emotional responses.

(I) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(II) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Consider how you might have responded if you were in either of these situations.

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue III**

**Julio:** If we had that new caliper you and I saw at the Electronics Show last month, we'd be on our way to the finish line.

**Roger:** That thing costs five to seven thousand dollars. No way we're going to waste more money on this project.

**Julio:** "Waste more money?" (brief pause) You seem to have a concern about the budget that we haven't discussed. What are you saying, Roger?

**Roger:** I'm saying that we've got a mandate to stay within budget so we can be in the black with this new drill two years after it's out.

**Julio:** Okay, (takes audible deep breath) I understand what you're saying and I think I've made every effort to stay within budget. Take a look at the expenditures. There's no fat. We both want this project to succeed, to make us look good, right? I'm trying to understand how seven thousand more dollars is going to look bad in a total budget of over a quarter of a million?

**Roger:** That new electronic caliper can't do anything more than the stuff we have in our own R&D workshop can do.

**Julio:** Right! But it can do it faster.

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue IV**

**Cindy:** You talk about wanting to be able to stick up for yourself, so we're trying to stand behind you.

**Diane:** Easy for you to say. You're married to that wimp George who's afraid to say a word to you for fear you'll leave him.

**Cindy:** Now wait just a minute... (brief pause for breath) I appreciate how you feel – that the group is pushing you too hard on what you should do with Jeff. It's easy for us to sit back and coach you on how to be assertive.

I know I'm not always that way with George. He says things that make me feel like a subordinate – on how things should be done. I think it's his old Cub Scout training... (Both laugh briefly.)

**Diane:** Well, maybe I just feel like the group is asking me to represent all feminists when I'm arguing with Jeff. I feel like if I ever give in to him, I'll be letting everyone down.

### **Questions**

In each dialogue, what can you tell about the way each listener demonstrated emotional control in response to the trigger?

(III) \_\_\_\_\_

(IV) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Check it out! Finding Our Personal Blind Spots**

Take a few moments to sift through several of your emotional filing cabinets. For each category or "stimulus" 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 listed below, write the first adjectives that come 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.

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue V**

**Roger:** That new electronic caliper can't do anything more than the stuff we have in our own R&D workshop can do.

**Julio:** Right! But it can do it faster.

**Roger:** (pauses) Look, I'm going to have to defend any further expenditures in the senior management meeting next week. You don't have to take any heat for this being over budget. I do.

**Julio:** So tell me what they're going to say, and I'll give you an answer for every one of their objections. I understand that you're under the gun. You help me, I'll help you.

**Roger:** Ok, I'll try to get you the caliper. But I can't guarantee it.

**Julio:** Thanks, Roger. At least I know we're both committed to making this new drill a success.

## **Exercising Emotional Control: Dialogue VI**

**Diane:** Well, maybe I just feel like the group is asking me to represent all feminists when I'm arguing with Jeff. I feel like if I give in to him, I'll be letting everyone down.

**Cindy:** You're not letting anybody down. You have to learn to choose which battles to fight and which ones to let go, or "give in" on as you say. We all do, Diane. That's what relationships are about.

**Diane:** Well, you never talk about you and George having fights. It makes me feel like George is some kind of saint and I'm married to some kind of women-hater.

**Cindy:** Ah! Is that why you referred to him as a wimp?

**Diane:** Uh huh.

**Cindy:** George isn't a wimp, and he's no saint either. I think it's just that early on in our relationship we set some ground rules on disagreements and they've worked pretty well. I'd be happy to tell you what they are. First off, no name-calling...

**Diane:** It sounds like you agree there's an issue, a problem that both of you have to work on, and then you become a team, working on it together. That may be simplistic, but is that the basic idea?

**Cindy:** Yeah, that's it, and I never really saw it that clearly. But you know, that's the way we approach a disagreement between two women in the group. We look at it as an issue to be solved by all of us.

**Diane:** Sounds like I'd better stay in the group and learn that process a little more for myself.

**Cindy:** Great!

### **Questions**

In each dialogue, what can you tell about the way each listener demonstrated emotional control in response to the trigger?

(V) \_\_\_\_\_

(VI) \_\_\_\_\_

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# Chapter Six

## Sensing

As you walk quickly down the corridor 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 percent of the meaning transmitted between two people in face-to-face communication can come via non-verbal channels. As such, only 10 percent 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 long known about it and used it. 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 historically been reserved for the leader of the group. More recently, this position of honor has also been extended to the host of the table. Hands raised 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.

Through kinesic behavior, people express their conscious and subconscious emotions, desires, and attitudes. Non-verbal communication is stimulated by a subconscious need to express inner feelings and can be more reliable than verbal communication, even when it contradicts verbal expressions.

Along with the use of vocal intonations (discussed later in this section), body language plays a crucial role in the building of interpersonal trust. 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 and they about you, simply by noting body gestures. However, each individual 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. On the other hand, 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

Again, 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. Remember that body language can augment, emphasize, or even contradict the words that someone is speaking.

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

Evaluation 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, the 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

A person dropping his 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 quite frequently.

## Readiness

These gestures communicates dedication to a goal. This is 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 an 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 is helpful in understanding a speaker's total message, but such interpretation is 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.

People can project many different emotions simply through their voice intonation. Voice intonation gives the vocal information; the words spoken give the verbal information. Vocal information is that part of the meaning of a message that is lost when speech is written rather than spoken. Added meaning can be derived from the words others speak and additional meaning can be added to the words you speak simply by changing voice intonation.

Let's take a look at the seven major vocal qualities that affect voice intonations:

### Resonance

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

### 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 – for example, the nervous laugh – and 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 the combinations of these vocal qualities and of the emotions and feelings they project, you will be able to respond appropriately to the silent messages communicated to you 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 just simple changes in vocal qualities, the actor can convey eight totally separate and unique feelings and emotions to the audience. This simple two-letter word “Oh” demonstrates the critical 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.

*What you ARE is shouting so loud, I can't hear what you are saying. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)*

[NonVerbal Communication - 10-page PDF eReport: How effective would your communication be if every other word you said was eliminated? This 10-page eReport will help you understand how to create a powerful nonverbal message that will support your verbal content. You will learn how to interpret and use body language to deliver the message you intend and how to project a vocal quality that matches your message. To purchase Non-Verbal Communication, please click here or visit: <http://www.alessandra.com/products/productdetails.asp?productid=15>](#)

# Chapter Seven

# Structuring

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, subject, or 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, sub-point, or supporting point is likely to follow.

## **Indexing Exercises**

### **Indexing I**

**Jessica:** Hello, Personnel? Please connect me with the placement officer. (pause) Yes, hello, this is Jessica Webster, Director of marketing and advertising promotions. Webster W>E>B>S>T>E>R>. I need an administrative assistant. The workload is getting...(interrupted by other party) Of course, it's authorized. Would I be calling you if it weren't? I haven't got all day. Here's what I need. Are you ready? (short pause) First of all, I need someone with ad agency experience. They have to understand the agency

mentality and how things are structured in advertising. I expect the person to come right in and begin working with our agency contacts. If they can't do this well, it could really foul us up. Second, this person must be a genuine self-starter. I don't want someone I have to light a fire under to get them moving. They'll need to write their own correspondence without supervision. They also must be able to handle many administrative details on their own initiative. Third, and finally, this person must have at least five years business experience, preferably more. And the skills to match. I don't have time to break them in, and what's more, they'll need to supervise the work of one or two other secretaries in the department. (short pause) Well, I think that's all you need to know. Please screen the candidates and begin sending me the most qualified within the next ten days. And don't hesitate to call me if you have further questions. Thank you.

## **Indexing II**

**Randy:** Henry, I reviewed my department's travel and entertainment forms. I also had a chance to talk with all my regional managers to clear up some of your questions.

**Henry:** Fine.

**Randy:** Your first question was about high overall Travel and Entertainment last month. I think in all, my sales staff ran about \$10,000 over the normal ceiling for T&E?

**Henry:** Right, and it really concerns me, especially since we're still in the first quarter.

**Randy:** Well, there are two simple explanations for that. The first one is we had our semi-annual regional manager's meeting in Chicago.

**Henry:** Oh, I forgot about that, but still...

**Randy:** And the second cause is pure and simple. Inflation. We're facing higher hotel, gas, and restaurant costs for our sales staff than we anticipated when we submitted this budget for approval six months ago.

**Henry:** I guess there's not much we can do about that. I'll just have to talk to the budget director and explain our situation.

**Randy:** Then your second question. "Why were they especially high in the Northeast?"

**Henry:** Yes!

**Randy:** Remember, there were those two heavy blizzards? A lot of our people were stranded in hotels for 4 or 5 more days than we usually bill for an average month.

**Henry:** Oh, yes. I forgot about the storms.

**Randy:** Now your last question: "Why all those oddball items from our western regional manager?"

**Henry:** Yes! Storms and inflation may be unavoidable. But that "care of dog" bill, and the night-club bill, and the deep sea fishing boat rental – those are well beyond what might be termed "nec-

essary expenses" – don't you agree? Is Bob running a sales program or an entertainment circuit?

**Randy:** Yeah, I'd agree with you, but this is what it's all about: Bob is trying to get that eccentric billionaire, Herbert Hutz – the plastics and fishing industry tycoon – to bring all his tooling needs to us. Hutz has been buying all his tooling from Consolidated, and we heard that he's not satisfied with their service program. So Bob's making an all-out pitch for the account. He thinks he may be about to land a contract.

**Henry:** Are you sure it's a contract and not a swordfish?

**Randy:** Henry, what can we say if Herbert Hutz needs special treatment? It's a very big account.

**Henry:** We can say Bob's spending money like water. But (hesitates) well, tell Bob to go ahead. I wish him luck.

**Randy:** Thanks, Henry. I knew you'd understand.

## Responses to Indexing Readings

Practice your indexing skills using the readings found on Page 51 and the framework below.

### FIRST READING:

Key Point A:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Key Point B:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Key Point C:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### SECOND READING:

Key Point A:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Key Point B:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Key Point C:

Reason 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Sequencing**

Sequencing is listening for order or priority. In some communications, the speaker is re-laying 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. If the content is critical, check back with the speaker to verify 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 will help you 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.

## **Sequencing Exercises**

### **Sequencing Reading I**

**Customer:** It's about time! I've been trying to talk to someone about this stupid matter for weeks. Always the same run-around. Is this Mr. Green? Now don't interrupt. I don't expect any real satisfaction in this matter, but I want you to hear me out. I spoke to Ms. Stone the last time I called, but she was less help than Ms. Kline who referred me to her.

Ms. Stone told me that the information I'd received from Mr. West was admittedly somewhat confused. When I talked to Ms. Kline, she wouldn't even admit to this so you can imagine the state I was in after talking to her. Mr. West sounded like he knew what he was talking about and I certainly needed help after my conversation with Ms. Janes. After talking with those four people, I'm thoroughly lost. It's too late to do anything, Mr. Green, and I hope you're satisfied.

### **Sequencing Reading II**

**Mary:** We really have a very simple system. If everyone would only learn their jobs, we'd never have a foul-up. When the order first came in, it went by mistake to Inventory Control. When Bob received it there, he didn't look for the Order Department's "received" stamp, nor did he check to see whether the Credit Department had placed an approved charge number on it. Bob made his inventory check, found he had enough stock of these items to fill the order, and made another error by sending it on to the warehouse for shipping.

Irene, in the warehouse, packed the order but realized she couldn't ship it because there was no shipping label, which meant that the order had bypassed the Billing Department. She then put the package aside and sent the paperwork to the Billing Department. Harry, in Billing, who does understand the procedures, realized that this customer's order was processed by Bob in Inventory Control who sent it to Shipping before it was processed by the Order Department. Harry sent it back to the Order Department. Susan then typed the order, dated, and stamped it. Since it came from Harry, Susan assumed the best thing to do was to send it back to Harry.

When Harry found this order in his "In" box without the second step in the process completed, he sent it to the Credit Department. Jim, in credit, checked the customer's file and marked the order "approved" with the appropriate customer charge number. Jim then sent it on to Inventory control as he should. When Bob received the order in inventory, he didn't realize that he had already filled it. He checked his stock and found that he was then out of those items, so he marked it "Back Order." He also didn't take the next step to send it back to Harry for billing, so no one caught the mistake. Now we have a customer who has received a back order notice on items that have been packed and are ready for shipment to him.

## Comparing Exercises

### Comparing Reading I

A vote for me means a strong commitment to the education of your children. A vote for me means you won't have to listen to the rantings and ravings of our current mayor for another four years. He won't be an embarrassment to the city anymore. And a vote for me means you'll join the teacher's union, the firefighters association, the chamber of commerce, and many other civic groups all of whom endorse my candidacy in making our fair city a better place in which to live and raise our children.

### Comparing Reading II

**First Speaker:** The unrestricted ownership and use of handguns in the United States is a constitutional freedom guaranteed by the founders of this nation. The present furor being raised in the liberal press by self-interested do-gooders is an insidious attempt to distort the ideals of a free society, so carefully documented in law by the founding fathers of this republic.

To date, the only purpose their argument has served is to restrict the law-abiding citizen from exercising his right to protect his home and loved ones from criminals who will always have access to the weapons denied to the rest of us. The basic concerns of a free society are involved in this issue. The first action in a totalitarian state is to take power out of the hands of the people, and the usual stated support for this action is that it is in "the people's best interest." The surest way to lose our freedom is to reserve weapons for the military, the police, and criminals.

**Second Speaker:** Freedom in a democracy is protected by laws, not guns. The constitution of the United States gives the people the right to establish law enforcement agencies to protect their freedoms and to keep the individual from playing "God" by taking the law into their own hands. It's the distortion of this very constitutional principle on which the gun-toting criminal relies.

If we do not work to support those lawfully established agencies in their efforts to restrict the ownership of handguns, we're denying law and order, and in doing so, supporting violence and organized crime. Free access to handguns has made our cities and even some of our schools armed camps, and has destroyed the authority of the police to protect our homes and loved ones. The great majority of police officials in this country urge us to set restrictions on who can and cannot own a handgun.

## **Sequencing Exercises**

### **Sequencing Exercise I**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Sequencing Exercise II**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Comparing Exercises**

Note your responses to each of the Comparing exercises below:

### **Comparing Exercise I**

**Key Points Noted:**

---

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---

**Comparisons identified (Pros vs. Cons, Advantages vs. Disadvantages, Facts vs. Theories or Opinions):**

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**Comparisons identified (Pros vs. Cons, Advantages vs. Disadvantages, Facts vs. Theories or Opinions):**

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**Questions you would ask to clarify or verify:**

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### **Comparing Exercise II**

**Key Points Noted:**

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---

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**Comparisons identified (Pros vs. Cons, Advantages vs. Disadvantages, Facts vs. Theories or Opinions):**

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---

**Comparisons identified (Pros vs. Cons, Advantages vs. Disadvantages, Facts vs. Theories or Opinions):**

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---

---

**Questions you would ask to clarify or verify:**

---

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## Page 36: Indexing Exercises

### Indexing I: Possible Solution

*Main Idea:* She needs an Administrative Assistant.

*Key Points:* Agency experience, self-starter, and minimum of 5 years of experience.

*Reasons:* Example of sub-point – the new person will need to work with the agency contacts right away.

*Summary:* Jessica requires an administrative assistant who meets specific requirements.

### Indexing II: Possible Solution

*Main Topic:* Travel and Entertainment Expenses.

*Key Points:* Higher overall costs due to inflation, increased expenses from storm, and odd expenses that result from landing the Hutz account.

*Summary:* Randy's expenses were higher due to unavoidable costs due to a special meeting, inflation, weather, and a special marketing effort.

## Page 40: Sequencing Exercises

### Sequencing I

1. Ms. Janes
2. Mr. West
3. Ms. Kline
4. Ms. Stone
5. Mr. Green

### Sequencing II

1. Order Department
2. Credit
3. Inventory
4. Billing
5. Shipping

# Chapter Eight

## The Power of Listening: A Conclusion

The sixth step of the CARESS Model – Structure – is an important listening skill, for through structuring you are able to understand and remember the essence of the speaker’s message. But, like each of the other skills, it can’t stand alone. To be a truly active listener and know that you are receiving all the information that the speaker is sending requires that you practice and perfect all six parts of the CARESS Model. You must be:

1. *Concentrating* on your speaker(s).
2. *Acknowledging* the speaker frequently to ensure her that you are indeed listening
3. *Researching and responding* to completely understand the content of what she is saying, to gather additional information, and to let the speaker know that you understand the feelings behind the message
4. *Exercising Emotional Control* to ensure that bias and prejudice don’t create impenetrable barriers to the messages you are attempting to hear.
5. *Sensing* non-verbal messages by observing the speaker’s body language, listening to their vocal intonations, and remaining observant to changes in both.
6. *Structuring* the message, either through mental or written notes, to ensure that you hear and remember the essence of the speaker’s message.

*Listening is a major key to success. Keep your radar finely tuned. You never know where a good idea will come from or how far it will take you. (H. Jackson Brown, Jr.)*

You have now learned each key of the CARESS Model. The skills are now yours to use . . . or are they? Although the six skills are relatively simple to learn and may appear simple to use, implementing them may be a more difficult task. Applying the six keys 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 workbook 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!

## **Game Plan for Effective Listening**

*Suggestion:* Use your work from the following exercises to complete your game plan:

### **Power of Listening Activity**

- Personal Benefits

### **POL Workbook Page**

2

- The Listening Profile

3-5

- Distractions

7

- Finding Our Personal Blind Spots

28

- Self-Observation Checklists—Opposing Viewpoints Activity

34

First, consider where in your personal or professional life improving listening skills and habits will have the most significant, immediate benefit. Identify two specific, priority situations:

(1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Now, for each of the two situations just noted, which of the six listening keys discussed in this program will receive your priority attention? What specifically will you do to practice or demonstrate them?

**The Six Keys to Effective Listening**

Concentrating  
Acknowledging  
Researching and Responding  
Exercising Emotional Control  
Sensing  
Structuring

**First situation:**

(1) LISTENING KEY: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Second situation:

(1) LISTENING KEY: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) LISTENING KEY: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Finally...

Of the various benefits discussed in the Power of Listening program, which ones will motivate you to continue to develop your listening skills over the longer term?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX

### Instructions for Opposing Viewpoints Activity

Here's an exciting activity to try with two other partners to practice listening under difficult circumstances.

**OBJECTIVE:** To practice active listening under difficult communication situations.

**Prepare 5 min.** Work with triads. Each player-pair (A-B, B-C, C-A) selects a topic from the list on the next page about which they have opposing viewpoints. Select three different topics—one topic for each pair of players.

**Round One 20 min.** Player A spends up to 2 minutes telling Player B his/her viewpoint on the first topic. Player C is the observer. (Use the Observer Checklist provided).

Next, Player B spends up to 2 minutes presenting the opposing point of view to Player A. Observer C remains silent (verbally and non-verbally).

After A and B have finished, Observer C shares his observations for no more than 1 minute. For 1 additional minute, the speakers share feedback on what behaviors indicated that they were each practicing active listening while listening to the opposing viewpoint, or share their experiences of trying to listen.

**SHIFT PAIRS and TOPICS** Players B and C share their opposing viewpoints on the second topic; A is the observer. For two minutes, share observations.

**SHIFT PAIRS and TOPICS AGAIN.** Players C and A share their opposing viewpoints on the third topic; B is the observer. Share observations.

**Between Rounds 5 min.** Players have two minutes to record self-observation notes on their copy of the Observation Checklist.

Each pair (A-B, B-C, C-A) selects a second topic from the list

**Round Two 30 min.** Once again, Player A spends up to 2 minutes telling Player B his/her viewpoint on the first topic. Player C is the observer. (Use Observer Checklist on page 68).

This time, before sharing the opposing viewpoint, Player B spends 1 minute paraphrasing back to Player A what A's position/points and reasons were – why A feels the way he/she does. Player B must continue to do this until the feedback is acceptable to Player A – the point where A feels that B really understood his/her point of view.

Then, B shares with A his/her opposing point of view on the same topic for two minutes.

Now it's Player A's turn to paraphrase for 1 minute – feeding back to B what he/she heard as B's key points and reasons for opposing the original position. A continues to do this until the paraphrasing is accepted by B.

**SHIFT PAIRS and TOPICS .** In sequence, Player B shares his/her position on the second topic, C paraphrases B's key points and reasons. Then C presents his/her opposing posi-

tion to B, followed by B's paraphrasing-feedback to C. A is the observer. For 2 minutes, share observations.

SHIFT PAIRS and TOPICS AGAIN. In sequence, Player C shares his/her position on the third topic; A paraphrases C's key points and reasons until "accepted." Then A presents the opposing position to C, followed by C's paraphrasing-feedback to A. B is the observer. For 2 minutes, share observations.

## **Topics for Opposing Viewpoints Activity**

Remember! Each player-pair (A-B, B-C, C-A, etc.) must select a topic about which they truly have opposing viewpoints. Choose a different topic for both rounds of the exercise.

*Smoking In Public:* Smoking should/should not be allowed in restaurants and other public places.

*Abortion:* The right to have an abortion belongs/does not belong solely to the pregnant women.

*Motorcycle Helmets:* Riders should/should not be required to wear helmets.

*Balanced Budget:* There should be/should not be a balanced budget amendment.

*Term Limits:* Elected Congresspersons should/should not be limited to a specific number of terms.

*Gun Control:* Handguns should/should not be outlawed.

*Three Strikes:* Repeat violent offenders should/should not receive a mandatory life sentence, with no opportunity for parole.

*Sex Education:* Sex education should/should not be taught in the schools.

*School Prayer:* School prayer should/should not be allowed in the schools.

*Health Care:* There should/should not be a national health care entitlement plan.

*Illegal Immigrants:* Individuals who are in the country illegally should/should not be denied medical, educational, and social benefits by our government.

*Death Penalty:* There should/should not be a death penalty.

The greatest payoffs for effective listening may come in times of tension and conflict. The Opposing Viewpoints Activity is only a small demonstration of how better listening skills, including feedback, can assist the process of tension reduction and conflict resolution.

## **Self-Observation Checklist — Opposing Viewpoints**

This checklist can be used for the Opposing Viewpoints Activity described on Pages 63 and 64, or as a personal learning feedback following any listening situation.

**1 = Did not use or demonstrate**

**2 = Used to a small extent/Skill needs improvement**

**3 = Used the skill to some extent, or with some proficiency**

**4 = Effective and appropriate use of skill**

**5 = Outstanding performance on my part!**

**NA = Not applicable to this exercise**

Listening Behavior	Self-Rating Round 1	Self-Rating Round 2	Suggestions to Myself
Concentration – I kept my attention on the speaker in spite of any distractions present.	_____	_____	_____
I acknowledged the speaker's non-verbal and short verbal expressions.	_____	_____	_____
I researched with appropriate questions, using open-ended and closed-ended questions to expand, clarify and redirect when necessary.	_____	_____	_____
I responded with verbal and feeling feedback. I paraphrased with parroting.	_____	_____	_____
I demonstrated emotional control.	_____	_____	_____
I observed speaker's body language to gain a better sense of his/her feelings about the information.	_____	_____	_____
I observed speaker's vocal intonation to gain a better sense of his/her feelings about the information.	_____	_____	_____
I structured the message by indexing, sequencing and comparing. Made mental or written notes.	_____	_____	_____

## Observer Checklist—Opposing Viewpoints

**1 = Did not use or demonstrate**

**2 = Used to a small extent/Skill needs improvement**

**3 = Used the skill to some extent, or with some proficiency**

**4 = Effective and appropriate use of skill**

**5 = Outstanding performance on my part!**

**NA = Not applicable to this exercise**

Observed Listening Behaviors	Round One	Round Two	Other Notes
Concentration—kept attention on the speaker in spite of any distractions present.	_____	_____	_____
Acknowledged the speaker non-verbally and short-verbally.	_____	_____	_____
Researched with appropriate questions. Used open-ended and closed-ended questions to expand, clarify and redirect, when necessary.	_____	_____	_____
Responded with verbal and feeling feedback. Used paraphrasing without parroting.	_____	_____	_____
Demonstrated emotional control.	_____	_____	_____
Observed speaker's body language to gain a better sense of his/her feelings about the information.	_____	_____	_____
Observed speaker's vocal intonation to gain a better sense of his/her feelings about the information.	_____	_____	_____
Structured the message by indexing, sequencing and comparing. Made mental or written notes.	_____	_____	_____



## **Tony Alessandra, PhD, CSP, CPAE**

**Building Customers, Relationships, and the Bottom Line**

Dr. Tony Alessandra helps companies build customers, relationships, and the bottom line. Companies learn how to achieve market dominance through specific strategies designed to out-market, outsell, and out-service the competition.

Dr. Alessandra has a street-wise, college-smart perspective on business, having fought his way out of NYC to eventually realize success as a graduate professor of marketing, an entrepreneur, a business author, and a keynote speaker. He earned his MBA from the University of Connecticut, and his PhD in marketing from Georgia State University.

Dr. Alessandra is president of **Online Assessments**, ([www.OnlineAC.com](http://www.OnlineAC.com)) a company that offers online assessments and tests; co-founder of **MentorU.com**, an online e-learning company; and Chairman of the Board of **BrainX**, a company that offers online digital accelerated-learning programs.

Dr. Alessandra is a widely published author with 14 books translated into 17 foreign languages, including **Charisma** (Warner Books, 1998); **The Platinum Rule** (Warner Books, 1996); **Collaborative Selling** (John Wiley & Sons, 1993); and **Communicating at Work** (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1993). He is featured in over 50 audio/video programs and films, including **Relationship Strategies** (American Media); **The Dynamics of Effective Listening** (Nightingale-Conant); and **Non-Manipulative Selling** (Walt Disney). He is also the originator of the internationally-recognized behavioral style assessment tool **The Platinum Rule™** ([www.PlatinumRule.com](http://www.PlatinumRule.com)).

Recognized by *Meetings & Conventions Magazine* as "one of America's most electrifying speakers," Dr. Alessandra was inducted into the Speakers Hall of Fame in 1985. He is also a member of the Speakers Roundtable, a group of 20 of the world's top professional speakers. Tony's polished style, powerful message, and proven ability as a consummate business strategist consistently earns rave reviews.

To learn more about Dr. Alessandra and his services, visit [www.Alessandra.com](http://www.Alessandra.com).

# The **Power of Listening** eWORKBOOK

## **How to Communicate Effectively with Anyone**

If you have found the information in this workbook useful, you might want to check out some of the other products available on my website. I would specifically suggest:

### **Time Management**

Time is a powerful force in our lives. Most people allow it to control them – constantly trying to catch up and get ahead. Yet time can be a commodity that we can use to our advantage – by controlling our time, instead of allowing it to control us. By managing your own time effectively, you can do what you need to do, and finally have time to do what you want to do. The Time Management eWorkbook is an interactive tool for determining your current time usage – so you can find out where your time goes now, and how you can use it better. Your success in your career and your relationships depends on your effective usage of time, and this workbook will help you determine how you can improve your success through your time.

### **Flexibility**

Do you respond to certain people, conditions, or events out of fear or anxiety? Are you unwilling to change your perspectives or positions in certain situations? Do you tend to face ambiguous situations negatively? If so, you may have predetermined views, conclusions, or patterns of behavior that are driving your actions - and impairing your flexibility. When you voluntarily refrain from participating in certain situations or interacting with certain people because of your lack of flexibility - therefore limiting your horizons - you decrease your chances of personal and professional success. The Flexibility eWorkbook is an interactive tool for analyzing your personal attitudes toward yourself, others, and the situations you face. This workbook is a powerful tool that will help you dispel those attitudes that are holding you back from realizing your full potential.

### **Maximizing Your Adaptability**

Each of us has a preferred way of relating to others. It's called our 'behavioral style.' Understanding and adapting to different behavioral styles is an important key to boosting your chances for success in any field. The truth is most of us do not try very hard to understand others. We scratch our heads in puzzlement at those who are unlike us, and then we move along – pretty much resigned to the fact that a lot of people are just, well, different. So we ignore them or deal with them as little as possible, often to our detriment. But when we fail to understand others, when we just assume they ought to be more like us, we create tension and discomfort – 'personality conflicts.' You can reduce or eliminate those conflicts by learning to understand behavioral styles, including your own. In this 21-page report, you'll learn about adaptability skills that can have a tremendous impact in your life. Adaptability helps improve productivity, increase sales, promote better customer relations, maximize your strengths, and in general, help you to enjoy a fuller, more successful life.

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ISBN 10: 1-933631-24-4

ISBN 13: 978-1-933631-24-0