

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A Chinese sage said: "Speech is difficult; Silence is impossible". It is only in silence that listening can take place. So the Chinese sage knew the importance of listening in the process of communication. Communication can take place when both the communicators will listen to each other. As one author put it: "Listening is the mother of all speaking".

There is something special about face-to-face oral communication. It is the most fundamental and natural mode of human communication. Yet human beings have not mastered the art of communication enough to become effective communicators.

Just the ability to produce words effortlessly does not make one a good oral communicator.

There is something else that is involved in communication that human beings find it hard to master – i.e. listening.

Listening actively and attentively is vital to oral communication. Several writers on oral communication point out that good listeners are perceived as good conversationalists even when they speak very little. In a conversation both the speaker and the listener have to listen simultaneously to each other for their communication to be effective. The speaker has to listen not only to any verbal responses but also to the nonverbal symbols or signs that the listener displays. Based on them the speaker has to determine from moment to moment what to say and what nonverbal signs to display with the words. Speakers who don't care to listen to their listeners might as well talk to the walls. They cannot be good communicators no matter how well they articulate of how knowledgeable they may be.

On the other hand, the listener's job is just as active as the speaker's. The listener has to process the speaker's verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols and respond by his/her own verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols to let the speaker know how his/her message has been reconstructed. The two – speaker and listener – influence each other and alternate their role constantly. In other words, the speaker is also a listener; a listener is also a speaker.

Listening and listening intently is a mode of awareness. In *The Dance of Change*, Peter Singe says that we have to learn to listen between the words in order to get to the deeper level of meaning. He goes on to ask: "Have you ever been in the presence of someone who listens closely to you? It feels discomfiting, like being stared at. People in society are not used to living at the level of awareness..." [Quoted by M.M. Monippally] Listening intently raises the level of communication; both the partners take the communication seriously.

Despite the fact that listening is essential to communication, human beings are not good listeners. Carl R. Rogers & F.J. Roethlisberger state: "The biggest block to personal communication is man's inability to listen intelligently, understandingly and skillfully to another person. This deficiency in the modern world is widespread and appalling". [Quoted by M.M. Monippally] The world has shrunk; our knowledge has expanded tremendously; but our awareness about listening, which is of utmost importance for communication, has not developed.

4.2 THE ANATOMY OF POOR LISTENING

1. Why is it that our listening is not as good as it ought to be?

MM. Monippally gives the following explanation:

"Our brain is capable of processing 500 to 750 words a minute while people only speak 120 to 150 words a minute. The listeners use only a part of their brain to listen; they use their brain's spare capacity to think of other things that interest them. The result is dissipation of attention, which leads eventually to poor listening."

We have often experienced that when someone is speaking to us our mind tends to wander away from the speaker's message. We are listening, and yet we are not listening. We are merely hearing, but not listening.

2. How does Listening differ from Hearing?

Too often people think that listening and hearing is the same thing, but there is a big difference. Hearing depends upon the ears, while listening uses the mind and eyes as well. The ear permits you to hear sounds; the mind enables you to interpret these sounds, to recognise some of them as words, and to fashion the words into thoughts or ideas. With your mind you are able to determine that an oral message is important, interpret the message, and react to it.

Stark reality is that as human beings we are poor listeners. Most of us do not really listen; we just wait to talk! Many a times, we are so preoccupied with our own thoughts, priorities, and agendas that we do not actually listen to what the other is saying. No one can be forced to listen. It is a skill over which every individual has complete control and it is influenced totally by internal motivation.

Listening as a skill tends to be untaught and untrained. Schools teach us reading, writing, speaking, and other subjects, yet no curriculum focuses on listening. Nor is listening generally

Business Communication

People are expected to listen effectively, a part of the training offered in today's organisations. Yet they are not being prepared with the necessary skills.

Lee Iacocca states :

"I only wish I could find an institution that teaches people how to listen. After all, a good manager needs to listen at least as much as he needs to talk... real communication goes in both directions."

Among many reasons for poor listening is the fact that speaking is more valued than listening. There are professional speakers who speak for a living. We do far more listening than talking, yet we rarely put much effort to focus on reception of other's messages. When communication problem occurs, we usually blame everyone else and do not consider that our listening quality may be poor. We rarely see ourselves as the problem. Everyone else has communication and listening problems, but not us!

George Eliot says :

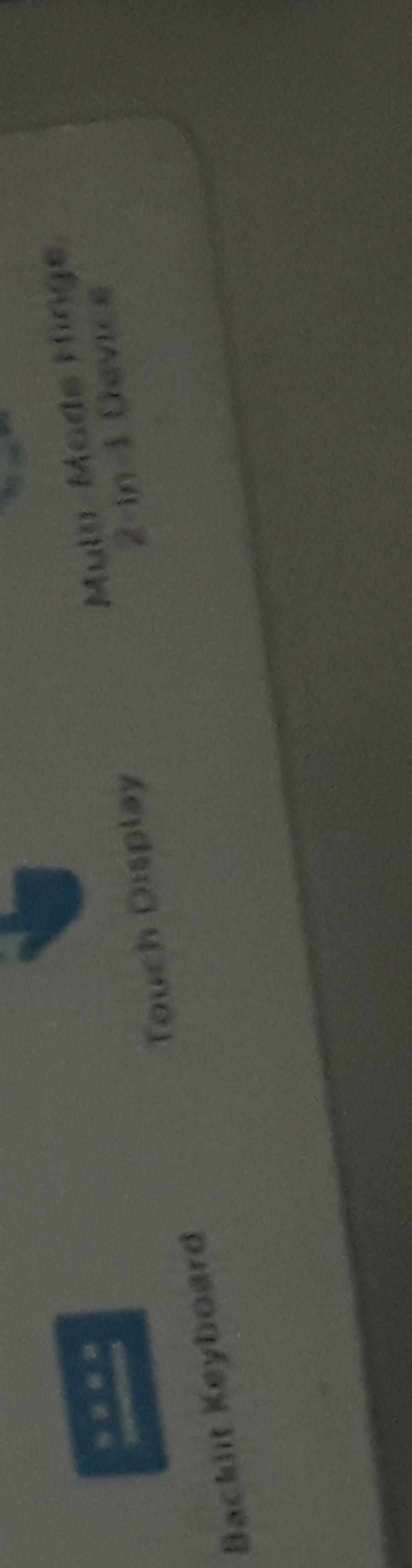
"The people of the world are islands shouting at each other across a sea of misunderstanding."

Another problem of poor listening is that it becomes retaliatory – "we don't listen to them because they don't listen to us". We punish others by not listening to them. One of the rudest things we can do to another human being is to tune him or her out.

Listening to other people is a valuable gift that we can extend to them and it conveys respect, esteem, and a strong sense of their dignity. Failure to listen sends a negative message of placing low value on other person. Listening is not only a skill of communication, but it is also a skill of building relationship.

The only choice we have as listeners is to listen or not to listen. Often we choose not to listen; we merely pretend to listen. So we fail to notice many verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols displayed by the speaker. We may jump to conclusions.

Thus, our reconstruction of meaning remains incomplete or far from the intended message.



Activity A:

Observe two of your friends in conversation/discussion and list down some of their poor or inadequate listening qualities:

4.3 CONTRIBUTORS TO POOR LISTENING

There are several factors – *linguistic, physical, and psychological* – that contribute to poor listening.

1. Inadequate Language :

Poor listening may result from the listener's weak command over the language and narrow range of vocabulary.

Certain words that the speaker uses may not make sense to the listener. These words could either be technical or rare. They could even be words that are common, but used by a particular community or a group of people in particular sense, and may be used by speaker without realising that the particular listener may not be able to make of them.

Faced with words that are beyond the range of the listener, he/she may not ask for clarification because of fear or shyness or because there may not be an opportunity for clarification.

It may also be that the listener does not ask for clarification because he/she may be expected to know the words and their meanings. Whatever the reason, it ultimately results in poor listening.

It is also possible that the words a speaker uses may give the listener a valid meaning that is different from what is intended by the speaker.

For instance, an employer may have a gross salary in mind when quoting salary to a job seeker. The job seeker, on the other hand, may take that figure as net salary, and not be aware about the various cuts. In such instance the communicators have interpreted the word “salary” differently, which may later cause misunderstanding.

While we normally associate listening with spoken words and phrases, we ought to include nonverbal symbols – listening between words – in the process of listening.

Inadequate familiarity with regional conventions and cultural values also may become a hindrance for full and active listening.

2. Difficult Physical Conditions :

Poor listening may also be result from the difficult conditions in which one has to listen. Public places and shop floors of manufacturing units can be so noisy that listening could become a problem. Not wanting to embarrass the speaker by repeatedly asking to be louder, slower, or clearer, the listener may settle for a meaning that makes sense to him/her.

This is true especially when the speaker is of a higher status. A listener may not have the choice of the context in which he has to listen. If one does have a choice to improve the physical condition and is too lazy to opt for it, then he/she is guilty of being a poor listener.

3. Non-Serious Listening :

Some listeners allow themselves to be distracted. They do not take listening seriously enough to devote full attention to it. They may try to combine several activities such as flipping through a file of letters, signing documents, arranging papers on the desk, and so on while listening to someone.

The temptation to combine listening with other activities is particularly strong when the people speak on the phone. They feel that the energy they save by not having to look at the speaker could be invested in doing other things. This could cause problem in listening conversation.

It is also not good to indulge in partial listening while one is face-to-face conversation. It can demoralise the other party, who may feel that he/she is being snubbed. Children are so sensitive to this kind of listening that they force their parents to turn their face toward them and look at them when they speak.

4. Antipathy towards Speaker :

One of the biggest causes of poor listening has little to do with language or physical conditions. It consists of the psychological barriers of the listener. These barriers are treacherous because the listener neither see them nor recognizes them as barriers even when seen.

For example, if we dislike a speaker or disapprove of him/her, the message that we reconstruct is always distorted. This dislike might be for any reason – such as we may not like the appearance of the speaker, or the speaker's mannerism, or some deep-rooted prejudice that we harbour within us – and the speaker becomes the victim. Consequently, we close our mind and this becomes a hindrance to our listening. Or it is possible that we may misinterpret the speaker's nonverbal signs.

5. Impatience :

Impatience is born out of overconfidence. Before they hear out the speaker some listeners assume that they know what is coming. Sometimes such listeners find the speaker too slow. Such listeners do not wait for the speaker to finish, tend to jump to conclusion, which annoys the speaker.

Another form of impatience is to plan one's response while pretending to be listening to what the speaker is saying.

This happens when the listener, guesses too soon what the speaker is going to say, and on that assumption, concentrates on formulating his/her response.

There is yet another form of impatience that many of us suffer from. Everyone tends to value their own thoughts and issues more highly than those of others. What we have to say is always more important than what others have to say.

As a result we are always anxious to talk. We want to demonstrate our knowledge base, correct the errors and misperceptions of other, and at times, be the centre of conversation or discussion. Because you may be in command of knowledge and have passion for your expertise, it is common to want to actively participate in or dominate the discussion.

The desire to contribute often occurs at the expense of others; instead of listening to them, you are planning what you are going to say.

6. Strong Convictions :

Our mind is like a sieve – that utensil that is used to separate husk from the flour. The grid, which forms the net to separate the husk from the flour, corresponds to our presuppositions [convictions] that we have received during the process of our growth. These presuppositions enable us to comprehend whatever we experience or that which our senses receive. Now if the grid is woven very closely, then very little will pass through it. If our mind is like that then we are narrow minded.

On the other hand, if the grid is so woven so as to have big openings then more will pass through it. When our mind is like that then we are gullible – accept everything that everyone says.

But if there are no openings in the sieve then nothing passes through it. When this is the state of our mind, we say that there is a mental block.

The trouble is our minds are often closed. We are so sure of certain things that we don't see the need to reconsider them. Our beliefs and our convictions can act as a shield that stops new ideas and new proofs from reaching our minds.

This is the very reason why there are so many disharmonies between religions. People from one religion cannot see the viewpoint of the people of another religion because of their strong convictions; each party is convinced that their point of view is the right one. Strong convictions make you deaf and you cannot listen to the other.

In the words of Stephen Covey we are reading our “autobiography into other people's lives”. On the other hand, active listening will result in a dialogue. Careful listening will help us to become aware of the speaker's framework, which will enable us to understand the message better.

7. Information Overload :

We are deluged with so much information that it is humanly impossible to process it all. From this volume of information that is available to us it is difficult to determine what is relevant and what is not.

When we are faced with such immense amount of information our listening becomes selective and thus, miss out pertinent information. When we are overloaded with information we tend to be distracted and this hampers our listening ability.

Activity B:

Identify the main contributor for poor listening that is likely in the following situations:

- i) Argument between two persons _____
- ii) Someone stating an allegation against you _____
- iii) Giving a 5-minute speech on the use of computers in your organisation _____
- iv) Your boss, who does not like you, speaks to you about a new assignment _____
- v) You are listening to a report that you already are aware of _____

4.4 LISTENING STYLES

1. ‘Ineffective’ Listening Styles

There are at least four ineffective styles of listening. The ineffective styles of listening are counterproductive or can be dysfunctional.

The **four** ineffective listening styles are as follows:

- a) The “missing-in-action” listener
- b) The “distracted” listener
- c) The “selective” listener
- d) The “contentious” listener

a) The Missing-in-Action Listener

This is typically a passive or detached listening style. These listeners, although physically present, are clearly mentally or intellectually absent. They may be preoccupied with personal issues and at times even appear to be in a trance [they have a blank look]. It is obvious that they are disengaged from what is being said. It is state in which there is total lack of reception of message, and not lack of comprehension.

You could become a “missing-in-action” listener if you have little interest in what is being said to you. It is as though the communication does not exist. It is not the question of misunderstanding the communication; you just don’t hear it. A person

might go missing in action if they feel unable to understand a complex message. Putting it differently, if the message is complex it could intimidate the listener and as a way to escape the listener will shut himself from the communication process.

b) The "Distracted" Listener

This is an active dysfunctional style of listening. It is active dysfunctional because the listener is actively engaged in his/her more immediate concerns, which makes the listening ability dysfunctional. You will find them doing two or more things at the same time.

They try to appear to be listening while reading, writing, or pursuing some other activity. Common behaviour of distracted listener is to repeatedly glance at the watch. This indicates impatience, or boredom, or even sending a nonverbal message to the speaker to stop speaking. Such listeners usually have very little eye contact with the speaker.

Some people can camouflage their distraction so well that the speaker gets the impression that he/she is being carefully listened to. They appear to be engaged in the process of listening by constantly nodding in agreement or using appropriate verbal cues. This is dishonest inasmuch as it is intentional distortion. Their only goal is to try to bring the communication to a quick conclusion.

You can become a distracted listener when you are under pressures to meet deadlines or wrapped up in your own thoughts or emotions.

When you are unwilling or unable to slow down your thought process enough to allow the introduction of additional information, you are the distracted listener!

c) The "Selective" Listener

In this style of listening the listener listens only that which conforms to previously determined opinions and positions. These listeners sift through the message to glean information to support what they already think, hearing only what they want to hear. They are not listening to the total message, but selecting only that part of the message that would validate their own beliefs. They screen out or ignore information that does not fit their preconceptions.

Selective listener can be either positively or negatively inclined. For example, if you were to pay a series of compliments while offering one small criticism, all that would

be heard would be the criticism. In organisations this type of listening is very common. Many superiors tend to be selective listeners, who choose to hear only the negative comments. It is also possible that someone whom you have complimented is so wrapped up in your compliment that he/she fails to listen further to your subsequent message.

You become a “selective” listener if you do not discipline yourself to listen to someone’s total message. It is an arrogant listening style and should be avoided because a selective listener dismisses the message of others and confirms only to his/her own self-righteous position.

d) The “Contentious” Listener

A contentious listener is one who uses a combative or negatively aggressive listening style. It has been described as “listening with a chip on your shoulder”. These listeners are always on a warpath, and listen only to find points of disagreement. They listen only to reject, not to actually process the entire message. They are determined to disagree. You may offer five points out of which four points would be of mutual agreement, but one point of disagreement is what the “contentious” listener would focus on – that would be the point of contention. Disregarding any area of agreement, they only wish to focus on areas of disagreement.

You can become the contentious listener when listening with your emotions. Emotions such as fear, anger, jealousy, resentment, etc., often result in combative listening patterns. This is subjective, reactionary listening. If you feel threatened in any way by someone’s message, contentious listening is a common response.

2. ‘Effective’ Listening Styles

Various situations call for different listening skills.

The four types of listening differ not only in purpose but also in the amount of feedback or interaction they entail.

They are:

- a) Content Listening
- b) Critical Listening
- c) Empathic Listening
- d) Active Listening

All four types of listening can be useful in work-related situations,

Regardless of whether the situation calls for content, critical, empathic, or active listening skill, it is essential to develop them to be effective listener.

a) **Content Listening**

The goal is to understand and retain information by the speaker. You may ask question, but basically, information flows from the speaker to you. Your job is to identify the key points of the message, so you concentrate and listen for clues to its structure; preview, transitions, summaries, and enumerated points. In your mind, you create an outline of the speaker's remarks; afterward, you silently review what you have learnt. You may take notes, but you do this sparingly so that you can concentrate on the key points. It does not matter whether you agree or disagree, approve or disapprove – only that you understand.

b) **Critical Listening**

The goal is to evaluate the message at several levels: the logic of the argument, strength of the evidence, and validity of the conclusion; the implication of the message for you or your organisation; the speaker's intention and motives; and the omission of any important or relevant points. But absorbing information and evaluating it at the same time is difficult, therefore, reserve judgement until the speaker has finished. Critical listening generally involves interaction as you try to uncover the speaker's point of view.

c) **Empathic Listening**

The goal is to understand the speaker's feelings, needs, and wants in order to help solve a problem. The function of the message is only to act as the vehicle for helping insight into the person's psyche. However, your purpose is not really to "solve" the problem. By listening, you help the individual vent the emotions that are preventing him/her from dealing dispassionately with the problem. You may be preventing advice, but do not do it. Try not to judge the rightness or the wrongness of the individual's feelings. Just let the person talk.

d) **Active Listening**

The goal is to appreciate the other person's point of view, whether or not you agree. This is done in the manner psychiatrist, Carl Rogers, developed the technique to help people resolve their differences.

Here is how it works: Before you can reply to another person's comment with your point of view, you must restate the ideas and feelings behind the comment to the other person's satisfaction. You go back and forth this way, until each of you understands the other's position.

To put it differently, active listening involves listening to what is said as well as that which is not said. That which is not said should be made clear to the other person by spelling it out. This would enable both the communicators to become acquainted with each other's background and thus message would be clearer. This is so because the words that we use in our communication are mere indicators of our ideas and feelings. When these indicators are explained the communication is less prone to misunderstandings.

Activity C:

Picture yourself in five situations – a prayer meeting, an official ~~meeting~~ with a boss on your appraisal, college principal's talk on Independence Day, a friend narrating an accident he had on his way to your house, and an interview with your favourite actor.

What would be your listening style per situation?

4.5 DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Your listening efforts are completely under your control. If you are willing to be an effective listener you can become one. In becoming effective listener one has to make deliberate and conscious efforts. There has to be a commitment to accomplishing the task of improving listening skills.

Learning is a process that cannot be accomplished in privacy, but must be carried out in the presence of people.

Since there is no formal education process for developing listening skills, it must be done with the help of people around us and with who we are in constant communication.

Six Communication Realities

a) Effective listening skills can be learned:

Good listeners are made, not born. Some people may have inherently better listening skills than others, yet everyone can learn to become a more effective listeners. Because the skills are acquired, the field for developing is open to all. No one has a listening advantage.

b) To become an effective listener you must be committed to your personal skill development:

There has to be willingness to learn. These skills, however, are not easy to learn; if they were, everyone would have them. You will experience success in direct proportion to the effort you are willing to invest in the learning process. Increasing your listening skills must become a personal goal. Do not expect to become a more effective listener in one giant leap. Listening is a journey of constant improvement.

c) Active listening skills must be practiced:

Increases in your skill level will diminish if they are not constantly practiced. Repetition is the key. Practice will enable effective listening to become a second nature to you. The first time you try you will experience only limited success. The fact is, some of us would easily give up if we do not find success. A limited number will keep at it until increased level of effectiveness is achieved. Just as professionals spend endless hours practicing their skills so also it is essential that we invest time and effort to improve our listening skills.

d) Time is an important tool:

If your emotions are high and you are on the verge of giving up, buy sometime and allow your emotions to ebb away. Remind time and again that you have to become an effective listener. Find time and opportunity to develop the skills. Many of your learning opportunities are within your control. Make time work in your favour.

e) How well you listen to others depends on your internal communication:

Your listening skills evolve around your ability to manage your own internal communication – what you say to your self when the listening process is on. The internal dialogue – i.e. listening to instructions you give yourself – has tremendous influence over your abilities to accurately absorb the messages of others. To be a good listener, you must have the self-discipline to identify and overcome the listening

impediments. The internal conditions you set for yourself when you encounter a listening opportunity determines whether you will listen objectively or prejudicially.

f) **Some effective listening techniques are more difficult to implement than others:**

The unique nature of individual listening strengths and weaknesses places, varying degrees of importance and challenge on active listening skills for different people. You have to assess your listening abilities and find where your greatest problem lies and work on that area for improving your listening skills.

4.6 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

For effective listening skill one has to develop a listening ritual. Rituals are important part of many of our repetitive behaviours. For instance, we have a routine for going to bed (changing into sleep attire, brushing our teeth, etc.) or rituals for eating, and so on. It is important to develop a ritual for listening. Ritualised behaviour is ingrained, habitual behaviour.

You can develop a ritual for listening by following these **five steps:**

1. State your intention to listen
2. Manage the physical environment
3. Make an internal commitment to listen
4. Assume a listening posture
5. Participate actively in the listening process

Step 1: State your intention to listen

Making an audible announcement of your willingness and commitment to listen accomplishes two things.

- a) It creates an environment of respect and dignity, and helps your communication partner realise their message is welcomed. The risk of approaching you is immediately diminished and the partner is encouraged to be very open in his/her communication. Simple statement on your part would help ease the tension between you and your partner, such as:

“Speak for I am all ears!”

“I am anxious to hear what you have to say.”

- b) Your statement of intention to listen also prepares you internally to shift from your current thoughts and activities into active listening role. You are giving yourself an internal command, literally instructing your ears, mind, and body to focus on the incoming message. It helps you in transition form whatever you are doing to the process of receiving the message. This is the very first step in becoming a committed listener.

Step 2: Manage the physical environment

Managing the physical means cleaning all that is lying on your desk or table that may cause any kind of distractions. We cannot remove our listening distraction, but we can surely eliminate the physical distraction around us. This would help in increasing your awareness, which the physical distraction have the potential to interfere with your listening effectiveness. The main objective of managing the physical environment is to help increase your awareness.

Eliminate as many distractions as possible, such as:

- a) Hold telephone calls.
- b) Reduce as much background noise as possible.
- c) Put down whatever you are doing and focus on the speaker.
- d) Clear your desk or put papers, letters, etc., into closed file folder.
- e) Position yourself so that you may not have the view of distracting activity.
- f) Turn off the computer or reposition the screen away from your immediate line of vision.
- g) Changing your position to one that is more conducive to listening sends a very powerful signal to your communication partner. It tells him/her that you are interested in what he/she has to say and are willing to give a quality listening.

It may also be well if you suggest to your communication partner to change the venue and go to the conference room or some place where both of you would be comfortable and away from distractions.

Step 3 : Make an internal commitment to listen

This is far the most important step in being an effective listener. Unless you make a commitment to yourself you cannot achieve effectiveness in listening. Here are some recommendations.

a) **Remove Internal Barriers:** This technique primarily addresses the problem of preconceived notions, assumptions, and prejudices that may become a hindrance in the listening process. Self suggestion to overcome labelling, judgement of people who may be different from you in background, function, or discipline, etc., will help you to separate the message from the messenger.

b) **Avoid the assumptions of negative motives:** This is very common in a work situation where you may not have a very good opinion about a person. This could become an assumption and question of the very motive, if the person wishes to communicate with you. This also occurs when you have reasons to believe that the other person may disagree with your thought processes and activities. To avoid assumptions of negative intent, say to yourself: “Even if we disagree, he is doing what he thinks is right”; “Their intentions areas valid as mine, even though we disagree”.

There are times when communication becomes contentious or it develops into an argument. In such situation there is a possibility of emotions taking the better of you and you are not communicating internally.

At such times stop for a while and get back to yourself and have a moment of internal communication. This will help you to gather yourself and proceed more cautiously. No matter how much you and your partner disagree, learn to give enough latitude to your partner. As a good book says: “A good word turns away anger”. Only in an environment of trust and goodwill can the communication process be fruitful.

c) **Challenge yourself to remember what has been said:** Challenging yourself sharpens your wits. Challenge yourself to listen so intently that you could accurately write a detailed summary of the conversation, even at the end of the day. As a ritual, put down in writing your perceptions and recollections while they are still fresh in your mind. This could be of help for the future conversations or taking subsequent actions and decision-making.

d) **Prioritise and process the communication from the messenger’s viewpoint:** Any communication process has two viewpoints – one of the speaker’s and the other of the listener’s. Each person’s viewpoint is important for him/her. As an effective listener it is essential, not only to understand the other person’s viewpoint, but also to understand its priority.

The Golden Rule suggested here is: “Listen to others as you would want them to listen to you”. In other words, avoid listening your partner from your viewpoint.

In the process of communication, try to identify the values that your partner emphasises. Begin to understand your partner from his/her point of view. This would help in prioritising other's viewpoint and your ability to listen to other's message would be enhanced. Such listening is empathetic or partnered listening.

- e) **Manage your emotions:** To be an effective listener you should learn to distance yourself from impulsive, negative emotional responses. Do not allow yourself to be provoked by other person's intentional or unintentional messages. If you allow yourself to be provoked and respond with a negative emotional reaction, you allow them to be victorious. When this happens you have lost the control over the communication process. Good and effective communication is when both the partners are equally in control of the communication process. If your partner is using aggressive method by using *you-based* messages (which increases negative reaction and reduces listening efforts) do not allow yourself to be swayed by them, but exercise your internal communication to overcome any negative emotional reactions.

However, should your communication bring out some negative reactions and emotions, it is worthwhile to take stock of things after the communication has ended. Often it is the negative that brings out the positive in us. Let the negative responses be a learning experience for you.

Step 4 : Assume a listening posture

In addition to managing the physical environment, you must also manage your physical readiness to listen. The visual demonstration of your physical readiness to listen – or the lack of it – has significant impact on your communication partner. The nonverbal messages that you send via your body could encourage, inhibit, or perhaps intimidate them. Body language is just as important a factor in receiving messages as it is in delivering them.

You can alter a person's message and create incomplete, abandoned, or distorted communication by means of your nonverbal reception. Body language that conveys readiness to listen includes the following:

- a) Establish and maintain appropriate eye contact.
- b) Avoid staring at fixed objects or off into space.
- c) Limit your field of vision.
- d) Keep your eyes alert and interested.
- e) Lean slightly towards your communication partner.

- 1) Maintain an open posture. Avoid crossing arms and legs, slumping your shoulders.
- 2) Do not present the speaker with anything that would cause distractions.

Furthermore, show your communication partner that you are listening to him/her by giving verbal affirmations. For instance, you could give your affirmation by words such as "I see", "Good", "That's interesting", and many others.

Your verbal and nonverbal listening responses can either increase or decrease the self-esteem and confidence of your communication partner. Any tangible signs of intimidation, disinterest, or negative judgement on your part would inhibit your communication partner and it would bring an end to the communication without completion. You may never know the importance of what they did not say.

I recall an incidence that one of my university professors shared with me.

It so happened that one of the students, from some other department, wanted to talk to this professor. He, however, being too busy, said that he would talk some other time. Next that the professor heard was that the same student had committed suicide.

Listening is not a science, but it is art of making one's life meaningful.

Step 5 : Participate actively in listening

The six actions listed below are powerful strategies for participating actively in the listening process.

- a) Take notes
 - b) Ask appropriate questions
 - c) Prevent yourself from talking
 - d) Summarise internally
 - e) Seek and acknowledge areas of agreement
 - f) Summarise and restate
-
- a) **Taking notes:** Be prepared to take down notes of points that you feel are important. However, always ask the permission and tell them why you want to write down the main points of their message. Prior to note taking process, ask: "This is important and I want to be sure that I am listening effectively. Do you mind if I take some notes?"

- 1) Maintain an open posture. Avoid crossing arms and legs, slumping your shoulders.
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Your verbal and nonverbal listening responses can either increase or decrease the self-esteem and confidence of your communication partner. Any tangible signs of intimidation, disinterest, or negative judgement on your part would inhibit your communication partner and it would bring an end to the communication without completion. You may never know the importance of what they did not say.

I recall an incidence that one of my university professors shared with me.

It so happened that one of the students, from some other department, wanted to talk to this professor. He, however, being too busy, said that he would talk some other time. Next that the professor heard was that the same student had committed suicide.

Listening is not a science, but it is art of making one's life meaningful.

Step 5 : Participate actively in listening

The six actions listed below are powerful strategies for participating actively in the listening process.

- a) Take notes
 - b) Ask appropriate questions
 - c) Prevent yourself from talking
 - d) Summarise internally
 - e) Seek and acknowledge areas of agreement
 - f) Summarise and restate
- a)** **Taking notes:** Be prepared to take down notes of points that you feel are important. However, always ask the permission and tell them why you want to write down the main points of their message. Prior to note taking process, ask: "This is important and I want to be sure that I am listening effectively. Do you mind if I take some notes?"