**The Effective and Ineffective styles of Listening:**

**I**neffective Styles of Listening: There are at least four ineffective styles of listening. The ineffective styles of listening are counterproductive or can be dysfunctional they are:

1. The “missing –in-action” listener
2. The “distracted” listeners
3. The “selective” listeners
4. The “ contentious” listeners
5. **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 appear to be in a trance (blank look). It is obvious that they are disengaged from what is being said. It is a state in which there is total lack of reception of message, and not lack comprehension.

1. **The “distracted” listeners:**

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

1. **The “selective” listeners:**

In this style of listening, the listener’s listens only that which confirms to previously determined opinions and positions. These listeners shift 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.

1. **The “contentious” listeners:**

A contentious listener is one who uses a combative or negatively aggressive listening style. They are described as “listening with a chip on your shoulders”. 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” listeners would focus-on, that would be the point of contention. Disregarding any area of agreement, they only wish to focus on areas of disagreement.

**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:

1. Content listening
2. Critical listening
3. Empathic listening
4. Active listening

All four types of listening can be useful in work related situations. Regardless of whether the situation calls for the content, critical, empathic, or active listening skills, It is essential to develop them to be effective listeners.

1. **Content listening**

The goal is to understand and retain information by the speaker. You may 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 for its structure; preview, transition, summaries, and enumerated points, in your mind, you create an outline of the speakers remarks, afterwards 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.

1. **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 and your organisation, the intensions and motive; the omission of any important or relevant points. But observing information and evaluating it at the same time is difficult, therefore, reserves judgments until the speaker has finished. Critical listening generally involves interaction as you try to uncover the speakers’ point of view.

1. **Empathic Listening:**

The goal is to understand the speakers’ feelings, needs, and wants in order to help solve a problem. The function of the message is only to act as the vehicle for gaining insight into the persons 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 dispassionately deal with the problem. You may be tempted to give advice, but do not do it. Try not to judge the righteousness or wrongness of the individual’s feelings. Just let the person talk.

1. **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 deal with patient.

Psychiatrist Carl Rogers developed the technique to help people resolve their differences.

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 understand the others position.

To put it differently, active listening involves listening to what is said as well as that which is not said. That what is not said should be made clear to the other person by spelling it out.

This would enable both the communications 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 misunderstanding.

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