**Importance of Effective listening skills**

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**Importance of Effective Listening Skills:**

**Meaning:**

**Communication is a two way process; that is, it consists of sending a message and receiving a message.**

**In oral communication, the speaker is the sender and the listener is the receiver. There is no communication unless the message has been received.**

**The effectiveness of every communication depends first upon the proper functioning of the sending process and then upon the proper functioning of the receiving process.**

**Listening is a process which involves reception, awareness and perception.**

**“Listening is a process of receiving interpreting and reacting to the messages received from the communication sender” – M V Rodrigues.**

**“Listening is an activity that can be turned on and off consciously or unconsciously. It starts with the receiver’s becoming aware that he/she should listen to and become attentive towards what is being said”. –Leland Brown.**

**Hearing vs. listening:**

* **Listening and hearing are not the same, they are actually different activities.**
* **Active listening means giving non-verbal and sometimes verbal feedback.**
* **Listening requires one to concentrate and participate in the conversation.**
* **Hearing refers to the awareness of the sound of another talking without really processing what is being said.**
* **Hearing depends upon the ears, but listening uses the mind as well, and may involve the eyes.**
* **The ears permit one to hear sounds and the mind enables the interpretation of these sounds to recognize some of them as words and to fashion the words into thoughts or ideas.**
* **With the mind one is able to determine that as an oral message and react to it.**
* **Interpreting the message is a thinking process. It depends on both the listener’s vocabulary and his attitude. The listener must want to grasp the meaning of the words.**
* **One may not consider the eyes to be an important tools in listening, yet, what one sees when a person is speaking is sometimes as important as what one hears. A smile, a quizzical glance, the appearance of boredom or exhilaration, all such facial expression and mannerisms of a speaker may alter the meaning of a message.**

**The Listening Process:**

**By Understanding the process of listening, one begins to understand why messages are so often lost. Listening involves five related activities, which usually occur in sequence:**

1. **Receiving:- Physically hearing the message and taking note of it is receiving. Physical reception can be blocked by noise, impaired hearing or inattention.**
2. **Interpreting:- Assigning meaning to sounds according to one’s own value, beliefs, ideas, expectations, roles, needs and personal history means interpreting. The speaker’s frame of reference may be quite different from the listeners, so the listeners may have to determine what the speaker really means.**
3. **Remembering:- Storing a message for further reference is remembering. As one listener, one retains what one hears by taking notes or by making a mental outline of the speaker’s key points.**
4. **Evaluating:- Applying critical thinking skills to weigh the speakers remarks is evaluating what being said. One separates fact from opinion and evaluate as the quality of evidence.**
5. **Responding:- Reacting once the speakers message is evaluated is known as responding.**

**If the communication is one-on-one or in a small group, the initial response generally takes the form of a verbal feedback.**

**If there are many people in an audience then one’s initial response may be applause, laughter or silence, later on one may act on what one has heard.**

**Barriers to Listening:-**

**Few people are good listeners. Some of the reason why this is so; are given below:-**

1. **Distraction: distracting noise from outside cannot always be avoided, but the listeners can seek the speaker’s co-operation in overcoming this problem.**
2. **Distraction in one’s own mind; Distraction in the listeners own mind are the barriers to listening and must be firmly checked.**
3. **Lack of interest; rejecting the speaker or the subject as dull or boring is something that a responsible person should avoid.**
4. **Criticism; The tendency to criticize the speaker’s manner, appearance, voice etc. is another cause for poor listening.**
5. **Taking Notes; trying to take down extensive notes is a sure way of missing the point.**
6. **Emotional block; There are people who cannot listen to figures, to politics or to descriptions of surgical operations. Also deeply held prejudice or an opinion may hinder listening.**
7. **Filters; some common human filters are beliefs, values, attitudes, personality, cultural prejudice, interests, expectations, assumptions memories, images past and future and past experiences.**
8. **External Distraction;**

**There are many significant external distractions that affect our ability to listen effectively:**

* **Physical distance between speaker and listeners**
* **Faulty acoustics**
* **The accent of the speaker**
* **Time of the day, at certain times we have less energy than others**
* **Distraction such as noise, people, activities, animals, traffic, machines, Views etc.**
* **Interruption such as phone calls**
* **Time pressure, such as deadlines**

1. **The use of “trigger” words; these words or phrases can express accusation, hurt, offence, insult, distrust, cynicism, sarcasm, scorn, judgmental, rejection etc. and they can vary from person to person.**
2. **Insufficient attention to non-verbal communication;**

**Even when an individual is not talking, he/she is still communicating in some manner. There are three main ways that communication takes place;**

* **Words 7%**
* **Vocal (tone of voice) 38%**
* **Body language 55% (facial expression, posture, gesture, eye contact)**

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