

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

LESSON 12

LISTENING & UNDERSTANDING



Lend an Ear,
Engage a Heart



LISTENING VS HEARING

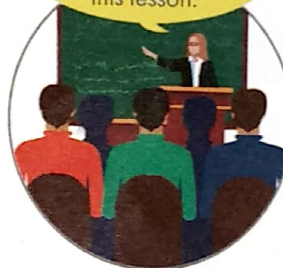
"Listen to me, class!"



"Why don't you ever listen to us?"



"Please listen carefully as I will not be repeating this lesson."



"Are you listening to me?"



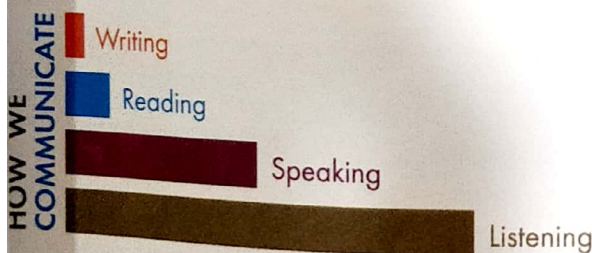
Every person has a deep and inborn desire to be listened to, and to be understood.

Now, pay close attention... we used the word 'listen' not 'hear.' **What's the difference?**

Hearing is a function of your ears. While listening is hearing with your ears, eyes and understanding with our mind and heart.

We spend 70-80% of our waking hours communicating with one another. Of that we spend 60% of our time listening.³⁴

Most people believe they are good listeners, but studies show that we only remember 17-25% of what we hear!³⁵ What does that mean? Even though we spend so much time listening and have been practising it for years – we are still very bad listeners.



In 1990, Elizabeth Newton earned a PhD in psychology at Stanford by studying a simple game where tappers were told to tap out the rhythm of 120 well known songs to the listeners. When the results came, everyone was surprised, because the listeners only guessed 3 songs correctly! This research shows that despite hearing so much information, we are still very bad at understanding what is being communicated.

One of the first places where we need to become better listeners, is in our own home. We tend to not listen to our parents or siblings, or understand their emotions or intentions. Most of the fights and tension in our home is caused by misunderstandings.

So how can we become better listeners? We need to begin practicing **Active Listening!**

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker.³⁰ There are three key factors to Active Listening:

- Listening with our Ears
- Listening with our Eyes & Body
- Listening with our Mind & Heart



1. LISTENING WITH OUR EARS

This may seem obvious – 'Of course we must listen with our ears.' But you may be surprised at how often we forget to listen. Here are some key components of listening with our ears:

» Stay in the Present

- When listening to someone, do not let your mind wander to other things – such as what you have to do in an hour, your homework, what you want to eat for lunch...
- Avoid distractions when listening to someone. Put your mobile away and give the person your full attention.

"So I don't think I'll be able to make it to class today..."

"I feel I am going to panic, panic, do tonight..."



» Focus on the speaker's words and not on what you'll say next

- When in a conversation, do you find yourself trying to figure out how you will respond rather than listening? This is a very common problem.
- Our first priority in a conversation is to listen and to understand what the person is saying. Our second priority is to give a response.
- Remember, you will be better equipped to think of a thoughtful response if you actually understand what's being said. Communication will be better overall if you are able to truly understand the other person's point of view.

When conversing with someone,

(1) summarizing the main points or (2) asking questions

are two proven ways to show the other person that you are completely engaged in the conversation.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

~ Stephen Covey

2. LISTENING WITH OUR EYES & BODY

Prisha excitedly enters her younger brother's room to ask him a question, Piyush was updating his social media pages on his computer.

"Piyush! Dad's birthday is coming up, so I am thinking that we should get him a laptop!" says Prisha.

"Okay." Replies Piyush without stopping to look away from the screen.

"What do you think he will prefer – Dell or Macbook?"

"Yes, whatever you think is best." says Piyush while still typing.

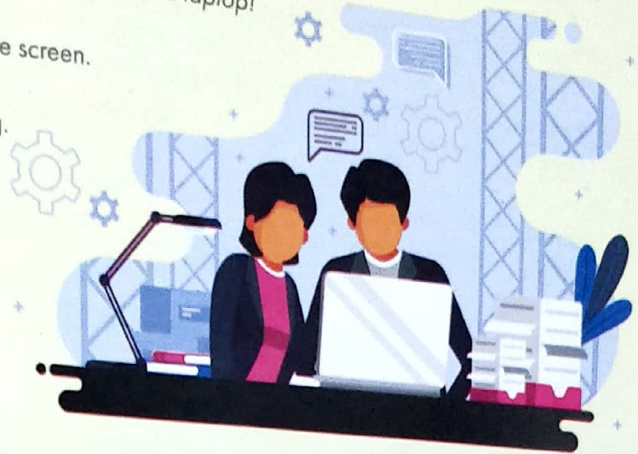
"But I am asking you Piyush!"

"Yeah I know."

"You are not listening?"

"Yes, I am."

"You are not listening with your eyes!"



We have all had this experience:

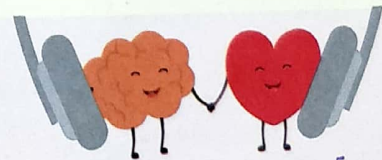
We are talking to someone and they look at the clock, or look past you, or look dazed and confused. How do we feel when someone does that to us? We think that they are not listening to us or are not interested in what we have to say.

Listening with our eyes and body is a very important part of making the speaker feel heard.

So how do we do that?

- Maintain **eye contact** and **concentrate on the speaker**. If the speaker is talking and you're gazing out the window or sending someone a message from your mobile, the speaker will lose interest in talking with you and may feel hurt.
- Along with eye contact, it is always good to **use non-verbal cues** to acknowledge you are listening to the speaker. This includes facing the speaker, nodding your head, and smiling, laughing or frowning when appropriate.
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- **Be aware of your surroundings** and the **speaker's facial expressions**. Many things are said silently, that is, through gestures and body language. It's equally important to pay attention to what isn't being said. Facial cues, tone of voice, slope of their shoulders and many other such traits tell us a lot about what the speaker is actually trying to say.

3. LISTENING WITH YOUR MIND & HEART



one saint
One morning, ~~Ramokh Swami Maharaj~~ *Swami* was performing his daily pooja. ~~Swami~~ applied an orange tilak on his forehead and then put a red chaandlo in the middle. A small boy, called Shvetanshu, watched this curiously. He wished to have a chaandlo applied on him. Slowly he went upto ~~Swami~~ *Swami* and then just stood nearby without saying a word. Everyone watching nearby wondered what the boy wanted. However ~~Swami~~ *Swami* knew what he wanted, he applied a beautiful chaandlo on Shvetanshu's forehead. The child's face lit up with a lovely smile! But Shvetanshu still did not go. Everyone wondered – "What does he want now?" The little boy didn't say a word, he didn't need to, because ~~Swami~~ *Swami* understood from his mind and heart, he picked up a small mirror and held it before the boy's face. Shvetanshu stared at his reflection, now satisfied, he ran off with a big smile on his face.

Along with being understood, everyone wants their perspective to be appreciated. So when we listen with that intention, they are listening with our mind and heart.

Perhaps even greater than being appreciated, people want **empathy** – they want their feelings to be acknowledged and shared.

So, how can we listen with our mind and heart?

- Try to **appreciate the speaker's perspective**, even if you don't agree with it.
- **Do not discount or dismiss other's emotions.** Empathize with their emotions – try to put yourself in their shoes. Try to feel what the speaker is feeling. If they are sad, be sad. If they are happy, be happy. If they are proud, be proud of them.
- **Be patient.** Let the speaker finish talking completely and then voice your opinion. If you morally disagree with them, then voice your opinion in this manner, "Maybe you are right, but I believe that..."

Activity

Recall a time when you requested something from your parents and they refused. Now try to appreciate their perspective and try to empathize with their emotions. Write about it below.

E.g. I asked my parents for the latest mobile phone, but they told me no. At the time I was upset, but I understand that my parents work really hard to save money and they can't afford to pay for such expensive gifts.

THE BENEFITS OF LISTENING

Being a good listener is a skill that can be learned and is beneficial in various aspects of our life. Being a good listener can impact our relationship with our family, friends, classmates, teachers, co-workers and superiors.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME |



HOW ACTIVE LISTENING IMPROVES YOUR LIFE

Discuss and write down, how active listening can improve your daily life and future career.

- Enhance productivity
- Improves relations
- Avoids conflicts
- Improves understanding
- Improves negotiation skills
- Adds to your image & personality
- Helps you to stand out
- you will be appreciated

LEND AN EAR AND CHANGE A LIFE

The simple act of active listening can change a person's life.

Darshak was running late for his flight. He was huffing and puffing, dragging his heavy bag towards the terminal when he heard on the speaker system, "Attention passengers for flight A9560. Due to unforeseen circumstances, your flight has been delayed by one hour. Please report to terminal B8."

"Great!" says Darshak as he collapses in the nearby chair to catch his breath. "I'm exhausted from all of that running. And I'm hungry!" he thinks to himself. He walks to the nearby restaurant and sees that the place is packed. He spots a table near the window where an older gentleman is sitting by himself, staring out of the window as the planes land and take off. He walks over to the table and politely asks the man if he is expecting anyone. It takes the man several seconds before he registers another presence. He looks at Darshak blankly for a second and then says absentmindedly, "Sure... Sure. Have a seat." He turns towards the window again.

Darshak gives his order to the waiter and then looks across the table at the man. He sees that his soup and sandwich have both gone cold and look untouched. Darshak asks the man, "Is everything alright, sir?" All of a sudden, the man turns to Darshak and says, "My son has cancer." He stares at Darshak with an unsure look on his face.

Darshak is stunned! What should he say? Why is this complete stranger telling him this? But Darshak simply nods knowingly. He begins to unload his story on unsuspecting Darshak. "I just found out. I live in Chennai but my son lives here. He told me to come visit him. I hadn't seen him in so long, so I jumped at the opportunity to come see him. We had a lovely weekend catching up and talking."



As he was dropping me off at the airport, he told me the bad news. I couldn't believe it! He told me not worry, he has started treatment and he is going to fight it. I told him that I am going home, packing up a few things and coming back to stay with him until he gets better." Tears began to trickle down the man's face. Darshak didn't know what to do! He simply took a tissue and handed it to the man and patted the man's arm. Just then, Darshak heard the announcement for his flight. He stood up to leave. The man stood up as well and hugged Darshak. "Thank you so much for listening! I needed to tell someone, anyone! Now I feel like I am going to be able to get through this!"

Simply lending your ear to someone can change their life!

Where did Darshak use active listening in this story?

SO... when are you going to become a good listener?
Remember! There is no time like the present!



Take the principles from this class and practice active listening for 1 WEEK at home!

Take time to listen to your parents and siblings and make a concentrated effort to understand them.

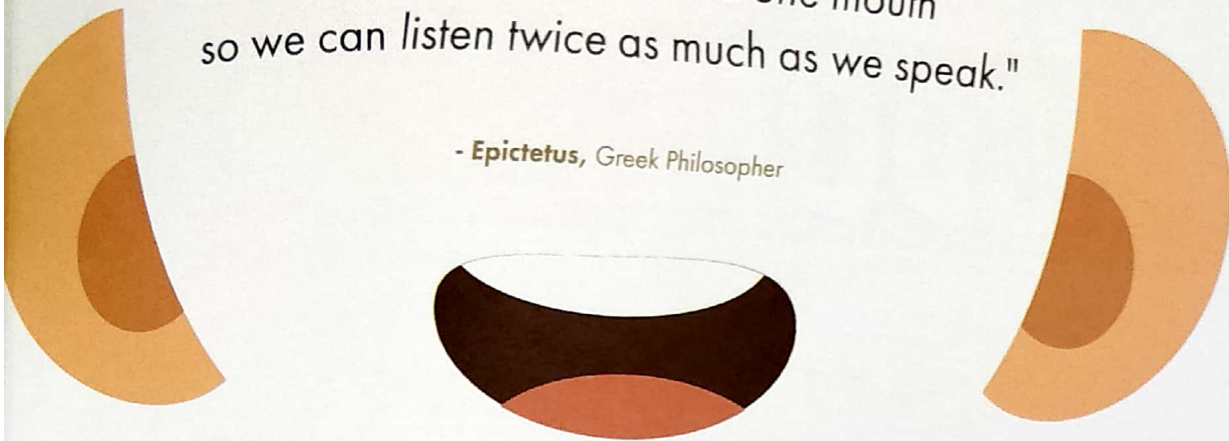
The other part of the challenge – if you are having a face-to-face conversation with anyone, immediately put your mobile phone away and give them your full attention. If someone calls and it isn't urgent, then don't pick up the call.

Just note down your experiences below! How did active listening help improve my relationships at home?



"We have two ears and one mouth
so we can listen twice as much as we speak."

- Epictetus, Greek Philosopher



DC Essentials

Active Listening can improve our relationships in our personal, academic & professional life.

The key factors to Active Listening:

1. Listening with our Ears
2. Listening with our Eyes & Body
3. Listening with our Mind & Heart