

From Hearing to Understanding:  
The Crucial Role of Listening in Interpersonal Communication

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An aspect of Interpersonal Communication that is of particular interest to me is listening. As stated in Interplay, listening is defined as “the process of receiving and responding to others’ messages” (Adler, 2021). Listening is an important part of communication because it helps build trust, eliminate conflicts, reduce misunderstandings, and improve relationships. Some helpful techniques that a person can use to become a more effective listener include paying attention, providing feedback, remembering what is said, and responding appropriately. For example, when someone is speaking to us, we should face them and maintain appropriate eye contact. It is important to also be attentive because we need to remember what is being said so we can ask the right questions when needed. Some questions that we may ask are, “Tell me more about that,” “What do you think will happen now?” or “How did you feel when you found out what happened?” It can be frustrating when someone whom we are talking to does not give us their undivided attention. Personally, this has happened before when I do not listen to my wife. For example, there are times when I will be on my phone texting and nodding my head as if I am listening when she talks to me. As I had mentioned in my previous assignments, my wife is a good observer and she knows me very well. She will ask me to repeat what she had just said to me and I am not able to do it because I was not listening to what she was saying. This is frustrating for her because she does not feel valued. Overall, this is why it is important to be attentive so we can hear and understand what is being said in order to build trust, reduce misunderstandings, and improve relationships.

Listening is demonstrated in the Disney movie Toy Story 3 between Chatter Telephone, Woody, and all of his friends. Woody and his friends were donated to Sunnyside Daycare by accident. They quickly learned that Sunnyside Daycare was not the friendliest place because it was ruled by Lots-o’-Huggin Bear. He had become a villain after he felt replaced by his owner,

Daisy. After Woody's friends realized that their owner, Andy, was looking for them before he goes off to college, they made a decision to leave Sunnyside Daycare. However, it was not going to be an easy task. Woody asked Chatter Telephone for help because he had been at the daycare for a long time and he knew the only way out. When Chatter Telephone gave the following instructions, "If you're going to get out, first thing you got to get through is the door. Locked every night, inside and out. Keys are left on a hook in the office." Woody responded, "Got it! What else?" Chatter Telephone continued with, "Lotso's trucks patrol all night long. Hallway. Lobby. Playground." Woody then asked, "Yeah, Yeah, what about the wall?" Chatter Telephone responded, "Eight feet high. Cinder block. No way through it. You go over or under." This specific scene demonstrated good listening skills because Woody listened and asked appropriate questions at the appropriate time to better understand the step-by-step escape plan for him and his friends. Woody was able to communicate the escape plan to his friends and they were able to leave Sunnyside Daycare and eventually return home to Andy.

According to Baker et al, "The most important benefits of effective listening are relationship building and the enhancement of trust. Effective listening can result in challenging one's own assumptions and thereby becoming more knowledge and even wise" (Baker et al, 2019). When we listen, we give something valuable to the person who is speaking to us. It shows that we are respectful and interested in what they are saying to us. Listening is an important skill that everyone should have because it helps us in both our personal and professional lives. We are able to grow in our relationships with others. However, if we do not practice being good listeners, it can affect our relationships with people. Baker et al stated, "As a result, a poor listener may be viewed as being arrogant, critical, and not paying attention to what is really going on under the surface. Poor listening may result in a misunderstanding (due to failure to

properly listen for content), the listener being branded as lacking savvy (due to a failure to listen for meaning), or distrust (due to a failure to listen for feeling and values)” (Baker et al, 2019).

Listening is an important skill to have because it allows us to demonstrate that we are paying attention to the other person. Also, we are able to build trust, eliminate conflict, reduce misunderstandings, and improve relationships in both our personal and professional lives. The lack of listening can be viewed negatively, and no one wants to be seen as arrogant or rude. Overall, listening leads to better communication, understanding, and relationships with people such as our families, friends, and co-workers.

## Works Cited

Adler, Ronald, et. al. "Interplay: The Process of Interpersonal Communication. (2021).

Baker, Edward, et. al. "Listening to Understand: A Core Leadership Skill." *Journal of Public Health Management & Practice*, vol. 25, no. 5, September/October 2019, Listening to Understand: A Core Leadership Skill : Journal of Public Health Management and Practice (lww.com)