

ACTIVE LISTENING

By Everett Bowes

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EARS

“Listening is loving” - François Lelord

The first component of listening is _____. This is the most obvious aspect of hearing, but it’s the _____ important part of active listening.

Researchers measured heart rate, perspiration, respiration and other biometrics of people digging a ditch. They also measured the same biometrics for people engaged in active listening.

They found active listening has a similar effect on our bodies as _____!

When you listen with more than your ears that’s _____.

Active listening is _____, and takes _____. The Chinese symbol for “listen”, “Ting”, reminds us that there is more to active listening than simply _____.

Listening with your ears is the most _____ form of listening, especially in America.

But I want to challenge you: Stop “hearing”, and start “listening”. When you “listen with your ears” you are only _____.

“Have you ever noticed how the most intriguing individual in the room seems content to listen sooner than speak?” - Richelle E. Goodrich

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EARS: BUSINESS PRACTICES

Remember, 80% of our communication is _____!

If you are only “listening with your ears” you risk _____ 80% of what someone is trying to say. Here are some ideas to help you combat the most common listening mistake:

First, If you are going to attend long meetings, conferences, or workshops _____ for where the breaks are located. Since active listening has a physical effect on people it's ok to need a break, in order to be at your best listening performance. If you do not see any pre-scheduled breaks _____ ahead of time. If you do this tactfully the meeting facilitator will appreciate your willingness to ensure the best experience for the entire group.

Something else to consider, _____ that often cause you to listen with only your ears. Maybe not getting enough sleep makes it hard for you to stay fully engaged. Or, maybe you recognized every afternoon tiredness or fatigue sets in and makes it harder for you to tune in to the people that are talking to you. Or maybe distractions pull your attention and cause you to only hear instead of listen. Whatever they may be, identify the culprits that make active listening harder for you, and set up guardrails to protect against it.

Lastly, consider this tip which really helped transform my relational equity in the workplace. When someone is done talking _____ what they just said. It's really easy to hear what someone _____ but miss what they _____. Summarizing it back to the person shows that you listened, and more importantly, that you care enough to make sure you get it right.

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EYES

“Listen with your eyes as well as your ears.” - Graham Speechley

Most of us can recall moments in our lives when our parents said, “look at me when I’m talking to you.” As an adolescent you probably responded defiantly, saying, “I am listening!” Now that we are parents we understand this better: when kids aren’t _____, they aren’t _____. This same principle applies to everyone, not just kids.

Though it’s common to think that we listen with our ears, _____ is the key indicator people look for when determining if someone is listening.

Yet, think about how many meetings we participate in (either one-on-one, or in groups), where eye contact is not established. Often eyes are glued to computer screens, tablets, smartphones, handouts, etc. Or maybe instead of eyes being glued to devices eyes are wandering the room, looking out the windows, or watching every person that walks by...

Did you know almost everybody gauges how well people are listening by how much their audience _____ with them?

_____ is the #1 way people feel they are being heard.

In business the concept of being a great listener is vital for so many reasons, one of which is that your ability to listen is an indicator of your ability to _____.

Years ago I saw a pattern in all of the best leaders I know: I realized Leaders are _____.

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EYES (CONTINUED)

I love the quote by Miggy Villas that says

“If you are a good leader, you are a good listener.”

Another great quote is

“As we look ahead into the future, leaders will be those who serve others, actively listen, and daily empower.” - Farshad Asl

So, if you want to increase your perception as a leader practice great listening...

One of the strongest ways to do so is to let your _____ serve as a reflection of your interest and focus.

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EYES: BUSINESS PRACTICES

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” – Bryant McGill.

Since our eyes indicate where our thoughts are eye contact with the person speaking is one of the easiest ways we can _____ to the person talking, and one of the fastest ways the speaker _____ that connections are being made.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

If you want to give someone confidence look at them while they are talking.

- When someone walks in to your office deliberately **put devices down**, or turn away from your computer. In fact, I often will turn my phone or tablet upside down when someone is talking, so notifications don't continue to pull my eyes to the device.
- When in meetings **don't take your phone**. I got to the point where all I could take to meetings was a tablet and pen.
- **If you are doodler** (like me) understand that when you're doodling you are likely not sending the signals you want to send.
- When someone is speaking, if you have to have a device open **tell the person why it's out** and why you are going to keep looking at it. They will respect your forthrightness.
- Or, when you must turn your eyes to something else (like a phone or computer) **ask the speaker to hold on a moment**. Tell them you have to briefly look at something, and you don't want to miss a thing.

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EYES: BUSINESS PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- **Know your pitfalls:** my pitfall is any flat screen TV. It doesn't matter what's playing... if the tv is on my eyes will be pulled toward it. I have to intentionally sit with my back to the tv so I don't get distracted! Also, active hallways tend to snag my eyes. Again, I have to intentionally sit with my back to a busy doorway or hallway so my eyes stay on the speaker.

Lastly, we already talked about how vital listening is to leadership. **Show your leaders the respect they deserve, and build your own leadership equity**, by making sure your eyes are connected to the person talking.

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HEART

“The ears and the heart are connected, it’s true, for when ears open wide, the heart opens up too.” – Richelle E. Goodrich

You’ve seen this before; in fact, most of us have even done this... Someone is talking, and then they say, “you’re not listening to me.” You quickly shoot back the last sentence they just said. Ha! You just showed them that you were listening, right?

No. You showed them you “heard” them with your ears, but not with your heart.

The ability to regurgitate the last sentence is not “listening”. The Chinese word “to listen” challenges us to look at the four necessary components of active listening.

The next component in “Ting”, the Chinese word “to listen”, is the symbol for “heart”. When we “listen with our heart” our faces and body _____ differently to the words we hear. I mentioned earlier how researchers say 80% of our communication is non-verbal, so when someone is talking, and we are listening with our heart, it is reflected _____ in the form of nearly imperceivable expressions. Small changes in the eyes, lips, eyebrows, shoulders, and more... these micro-reactions are the result of _____.

I know most business conversations tend to be more information-based than emotionally impacting, but when we listen with our heart our body language resonates with the speaker as if to say “yes”, or “I understand”, or “I agree”, or “the client said what??!”

When we don’t listen with our heart these micro-reactions are _____ ... and the person talking can easily feel _____.

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HEART (CONTINUED)

And, just like the other components to listening that we already discussed, you can't fake your way through this one. In fact Raquel Welch said

"You can't fake listening. It shows."

To truly listen with your heart you often need to tap into a sense of _____ .

Generally speaking you need to be interested in what your coworker is saying. Instead most people don't listen with a sense of interest in _____. They listen with an interest in _____. Ralph Waldo Emerson said

"There is a difference between truly listening and waiting for your turn to talk."

Active Listening, with your heart (or genuine _____), is vital, and in the business world it can unlock a whole new level of employee retention, efficiency, output and more.

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HEART: BUSINESS PRACTICES

In the business world “listening with your heart” can be the key to unlocking _____ !

More than anything else, your employees want you to _____ them.

In Captain D. Michael Abrashoff’s business book *“It’s Your Ship”* there is a chapter entitled “listen aggressively”. I love that! In the book he talks about reading exit interviews to find out why people are leaving the military. He assumed that low pay would be the first reason, but in fact it was fifth. Instead, one of the top reasons for leaving the military is also one of top reasons people leave any job: it's because they feel _____ .

Studies found employees will endure difficult corporate struggles if they simply feel what they have to say is _____. Employees don't need all of their ideas adopted. They simply want _____. The desire to be _____ runs deep in all of us. John Yokoyama said,

"I can't afford to say yes to all my staff's desires, but one thing is certain – I can't afford the outrageous cost of not listening to their requests."

Here are some suggestions for how to practice the principle of listening with your heart:

- **Ask questions.** This tip works magically in so many different scenarios, like being interviewed for a job, sales, performance reviews, and so many more. Asking questions and then listening to the replies unlocks something powerful in _____!

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HEART: BUSINESS PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- After listening to someone **tell them how you think that makes them feel**. This can be as simple as replying, “wow. that’s frustrating.” or “oh, I hate it when that happens” or “I bet you’re super-excited!” or even “and that’s why I never leave food in the company refrigerator”. Replying with an _____ lets the speaker know that you didn’t just hear, you listened with your heart.
- Something else you can do to show you are listening with your heart is **tell them the action you are going to take** because of what was said. Maybe you can tell them “I’ll tell management about this” or “I’ll follow up with them later today”, or “I’ll send an email” or “I’ll get that done asap”... Showing _____ you are going to take is a powerful way to show someone that you truly listened.
- Lastly, go into a conversation reminding yourself **"two ears and one mouth"**. Don't listen only with the intent to _____. Decide ahead of time that you want to _____ more than you _____!

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FOCUS

“Listen with the will to learn.” – Unarine Ramaru

With today's fast-paced, digital lifestyles we often pride ourselves in our abilities to _____. In fact, it's one of the top bullet points on most resumes today. But here's the sad reality:

1. Studies show people are not as productive while multitasking as they often think
2. When it comes to feeling heard, no one wants to talk to a “multitasker”

M. Scott Peck said

“You cannot truly listen to someone and do anything else at the same time.”

That truth is captured by the final symbol in the word "Ting"... the Chinese word for "Listen". The last component of Active Listening is _____, or undivided attention.

Today, there is a skill that is gaining more importance than multitasking: and that skill is "Focus".

We all have demands swarming our lives screaming for our attention. While they all need to be addressed, pressing “pause” on some of them, so we can focus intensely on one of them at a time, is the key to doing amazing work.

Steve Goodier said,

“The key to good listening isn't technique, it's desire. Until we truly want to understand the other person, we'll never listen well.”

Active Listening takes commitment, and desire to be _____. No one accidentally becomes a great listener. But the rewards for giving our focus to others is incredible.

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FOCUS(CONTINUED)

Active listening is one of the most effective ways to make others feel _____.

Ralph G. Nichols said

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.”

If you want to transform your business relationships harness the power of _____ when listening.

This principle applies to people in every office environment and every market sector. Joyce Brothers said

“Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery.”

If you work in an environment where creating healthy business relationships are a competitive advantage then commit to mastering the skill of active listening!

So, when someone is talking to you, stop writing emails, sending texts, or surfing the web... Give them your full attention and watch what the power of Active Listening can do for you!