



NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

HOW GOOD ARE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS?

Linda Fentress, M. Ed.
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor

*Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
James 1;19-20*



How can we improve our listening skills? The goal is to enter the perspective of the other person until you can see the situation through their eyes. Use these tips to improve your listening skills:

1. **Listen Calmly** - Don't defend yourself, argue, explain or problem solve. You don't have to agree with what you are hearing in order to listen and explore. Focus on the speaker's experience, not yours.
2. **Control Your Reactiveness** - Remember, when defenses go up....listening goes down. Remind yourself "I can listen with an open mind even if I disagree." The speaker is a separate person with his or her own feelings, thoughts, personality and past experiences.
3. **Be Aware of Your Non-Verbal Responses** - Don't roll eyes, sigh, groan, or give responses that stop communication. Maintain eye contact and encourage the speaker to continue.
4. **Four Steps of Listening** - 1) LISTEN (ask the speaker to stop and let you summarize if it gets too long) 2) REFLECT (repeat back in your own words what you heard and check for accuracy 3) ASK QUESTIONS (Seek to broaden your understand of what the speaker is saying) 4) EMPATHIZE (Let the person know you can understand by saying "I see what you are saying....." or "I can see how you might feel that way.....")
5. **Resolution** - After the speaker feels heard, ask a key guiding question "What do you need right now?" Perhaps they need you to take ownership, an apology, reassurance, support, comfort, understanding, acknowledgement, negotiation or even little or nothing if being heard is enough.

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

Stephen R. Covey