

Qualities Of Communication

Being a Good Listener

The benefits of careful listening are enormous. Listening enables us to gain work-related information. Listening enables us to be more effective in interpersonal relationships. Listening enables us to gather data to make sound decisions. Finally, listening enables us to respond appropriately to the communication messages we hear.

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Some ways to be a good listener include listening for the sender’s central idea. This is probably the most important step in listening. To identify the sender’s main idea, you must keep your own ideas in the background. If your own ideas begin to influence your

listening, you may miss what the sender is trying to say. All this implies that every speaker does indeed have a central idea. This may be a lofty assumption to make about all communicators, but we should make it if we want to be a good listener.

Another point in listening is to concentrate on what the sender is saying. Good listening requires one to work very hard. This means developing a style of listening that enables one to concentrate enough to get the information he/she needs, even while doing other things. Listening should be taken seriously and one should work hard to achieve it.

The Influence of Emotion

Sometimes, we let our emotions influence our listening. Often, we hear what we want to hear and not what the sender intended to transmit. We often assign our own values to stimuli coming in. Our attitudes influence our listening behavior. It takes effort and practice to delay evaluation of the message until later.

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It is often easy to reject what you hear as too familiar, unfamiliar or trivial. When we hear something that is old hat to us, it is very easy to turn off the communicator because we think we have heard it before. We may also do this if something seems too trivial for us to listen to. If we are not careful, a lot of important information may be missed.

We cannot just listen for the facts. A good listener should notice the surroundings, the reactions of others, the enthusiasm demonstrated by the sender, etc. All of these peripheral issues are part of the message being transmitted.

Avoid formulating arguments against the sender's ideas before you fully understand them. Thinking up opposition arguments takes time and energy away from our primary job as listener.

Techniques of Communication

“Does your style of communication have a positive or negative effect on people?”

Think of your own style of communication. Does it have a positive or negative effect upon others? If it is positive and rewarding, it will be the kind of conversation others want to have again and again.

They will come back for more. On the other hand, if your communication with others is continuously negative, they will tend to interact with you as little as possible.

A good rule of thumb is to try to make most of your communications relatively positive for the other person. Of course, you can't always do this because of the nature of some kinds of problems. Some people may lack the social skills necessary to cooperate in making communication positive.

Other times, when you must take a strong position in opposition to others, positive communication may be difficult. However, over the course of your many communications with your family, co-workers and colleagues, you should be able to make the majority of your communications go easily.

Making communication positive may be difficult at times, but it comes easier with practice. Some people can keep communication constructive under pleasant circumstances, but then lose their grip on it when the pressure is on. It is an important skill to be able to put others at ease and help them stay there through the course of the communication.

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We should ask ourselves this question on occasion: “To what extent do people voluntarily seek me out? To what extent do they take the initiative in contacting me, communicating with me, sharing ideas and viewpoints with me, and including me in their personal and social activities?”