

TOOL FOR PRACTICE:
LISTENING TO OTHERS⁴

STOP TALKING—you cannot listen while you are talking. One of the best ways to learn about a person is to let them talk.

EMPATHIZE WITH THE OTHER PERSON—try to put yourself in the other person's place so that you can better understand what they are trying to say.

ASK QUESTIONS—when you do not understand, when you need further clarification, when you want to show that you are listening, ask questions. Do not ask questions that might be embarrassing to the other person.

DO NOT INTERRUPT—give the other person time to express themselves.

CONCENTRATE ON WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS SAYING—actively focus attention on the other person's words, ideas and feelings related to the subject.

LOOK AT THE OTHER PERSON—the other person's face, mouth, eyes, and hands will communicate nonverbally with you. Looking at a person helps you concentrate as well and makes the other person feel you are listening.

LEAVE YOUR EMOTIONS BEHIND (AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE)—try to leave your worries, fears, and problems outside the meeting room; they may prevent you from listening well.

CONTROL YOUR ANGER—try to keep your emotions under control and not become angry at what the other person is saying. Your anger may prevent you from understanding what is being said.

GET RID OF DISTRACTIONS—don't hold papers, pencils, etc., in your hands. Your attention may be distracted.

GET THE MAIN POINT—concentrate on the main ideas being expressed; seek clarity, if needed.

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION—communication is a two-way process; participants share a joint responsibility for success.

REACT TO IDEAS, NOT TO THE PERSON—do not allow your reaction to the person to influence your interpretation of what is being said. The ideas may be good even if you don't agree with or like the person.

DO NOT ARGUE MENTALLY—if you are having a conversation with yourself mentally and arguing in your mind about what is being said, you will not hear what is being said.

LISTEN FOR WHAT IS NOT SAID—sometimes you can learn just as much by determining what the other person leaves out as you can by listening to what is being said.

LISTEN TO HOW SOMETHING IS SAID—we frequently concentrate so hard on what is said that we miss the importance of the emotional reactions and attitudes to what is being said verbally.

DO NOT ANTAGONIZE THE SPEAKER—you may cause the other person to conceal their ideas, emotions, and attitudes; be aware of the effect you are having on the other person and adapt your behavior as necessary.

AVOID JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS—this may lead to erroneous assumptions; the other person may not use words in the same way.

AVOID CLASSIFYING THE SPEAKER—do not classify the speaker as a particular type of person and then try to fit everything they say into what you assume would make sense coming from that type of individual.

AVOID HASTY JUDGMENTS—hear the facts before making a judgment.

RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN PREJUDICES—try to be aware of your feelings toward the speaker, the subject, the occasion, etc., and allow for any pre-judgments.

IDENTIFY THE TYPE OF REASONING—a listener needs to make every effort to listen for the reasoning being used by the other person, and to learn to recognize if and how it might be spotty.

EVALUATE FACTS AND EVIDENCE—as you listen, try to identify not only the significance of the facts, but also their relatedness to the issue or argument.

