



WARMUP: LISTENING ACTIVITY

How well do you listen?

1. Is there a May 24th in England. Yes or No?
2. How many birthdays does the average man have?
3. Some months have 31 days. How many have 28?
4. How many outs are there in an inning?
5. Is it legal for a man in Manitoba to marry his widow's sister?
6. A doctor gives you three pills and tells you to take one every half an hour. How long will the pills last?
7. A farmer has 17 sheep. All but 9 of them die. How many sheep are left.
8. How many animals of each sex did Moses bring with him on the ark?
9. How many two-cent stamps are there in a dozen?
10. A butcher in the market is 5 feet 10 inches tall. What does he weigh?

Listening: An Introduction

There seems to be a growing realization of the importance of solid listening and communication skills. After all, lack of attention and respectful listening can be costly - leading to mistakes, poor service, misaligned goals, wasted time and lack of teamwork.

- **You can't sell unless you understand your customer's problem**
- **You can't complete the task if you don't understand the desired outcome**
- **You can't manage unless you understand your employee's motivation**
- **You can't gain team consensus unless you understand each team member's feelings about the issue at hand**

Healthy Responses in Helping Relationships

Effective responses for healthy communication are those perceived as being empathetic, caring, warm, and thoughtful. The seven responses listed below are in the order of most effective to least effective. Remember, however, that each of these responses could be effective depending on the context in which it was used.





1. Understanding:

An understanding response is most likely to create a climate where honest, frank communication can occur. It is a feelings-oriented response which conveys sensitivity and understanding. Strong negative feelings can become a barrier to communication; this response can diminish those feelings. Understanding is empathy, i.e., accurately tuning in to what the other person is feeling at the time. It implies listening beyond the words and reflecting the feelings.

Understanding Response Examples:

- You're feeling discouraged and wonder what's the use.
- You're offended and angry with your co-worker's statements.
- You're excited over your new assignment.
- You seem pleased to have been selected for the team.

By focusing on others' feelings you are recognizing them as individuals: persons worthy of your concern. This type of response can reduce hostile feelings. It can also be used with people when they are over-emotional, crying, fearful, etc., to get beyond those feelings, or reactions. Understanding can repair a damaged relationship.

2. Clarification:

The clarification response indicates your intent to comprehend what the other is saying or to identify the most significant feelings that are emerging. It indicates that what others are saying is important and you are checking it out to ensure your perceptions. This can be done in several ways: echoing the last few words spoken, summarizing the points that seem most relevant, or paraphrasing. A response of this nature can be followed profitably by a period of silence. This gives the sender a chance to draw thoughts together or to correct your impression. Clarification responses reinforce your desire to see from the other's point of view.

Clarification Response Examples:

- You were pleased with our service, but unhappy with the final product.
- You seem to be saying that you were frustrated by the response you got to your questions.
- Let's see, what you want to do is find a family activity for the day?
- If I hear you correctly, you are saying that you could devise a better way of doing this.

This response is useful in reducing hostility. It not only encourages the sender to explain more fully, but also serves to focus the discussion, especially when followed by silence on your part. It gives the sender a chance to draw thoughts together and to take responsibility for coming up with personal ideas.

Minds are like





3. Questioning:

Like it sounds, the question response seeks to elicit information. It allows others to develop a point. Open questions focus on the others' general situation, thoughts, reactions, and feelings. They tend to promote communication. Closed questions focus on specific facts or aspects of the others situation, generally evoking "yes" or "no" answers.

Questioning Response Examples:

Do you get along well with your boss? (closed)
Can you tell me about your boss? (open)

Do you like the new house? (closed)
What do you like about the new house? (open)

Is this confusing you? (closed)
What is it that's confusing you? (open)



Open questions are recommended for exploring a broad topic. Closed questions can be interspersed to get to specific facts or can be used to cut off long, irrelevant explanations. In either case, listening to the answer, both what is said or what is left unsaid, is vital to the questioning process.

Caution is needed with questions beginning with "why." They pressure the other for an explanation and can cause resentment. "Why" questions can seem to express disapproval, being perceived as a cut-down or criticism.

4. Information giving:

Information giving involves relating facts in an objective manner without judgment or evaluation. It leaves the other person free to accept or reject the facts. It allows the other to take responsibility for using the information. This response is useful in giving both positive and negative feedback (confrontation). The sender relates only to what has actually occurred and the effect that this has had. Words such as "always," "never," "should," "ought," are only used in setting limits.

Information giving Response Examples:

- This project has a time frame of 6 weeks and should not exceed a budget of \$850.
- Children are not allowed to climb or play on the posts and beams in the entrance hall.
- We serve customers between the hours of 10:00 in the morning and 6:00 in the evening.





Responding to others' feelings with an information response increases the chances of their respecting and following the limits suggested.

5. Reassurance:

Reassurance responses reduce anxiety, diffuse intense feelings, and express confidence. They provide a pat on the back, but imply that certain feelings or thoughts should be dismissed as being 'normal' or 'common.' Reassurance is often used by people who come upon a situation that is out of their realm of experience; they don't know what to do or say, and they may be embarrassed.

Reassurance Response Examples:

- Don't worry. Other people have made it; so will you.
- Things may look bad now, but it will be OK in the morning.
- You are not really fat.
- Hang in there. Disappointment is a normal feeling.

6. Analytical:

The intent of the analytical response is to analyze, explain, or interpret the other person's behaviour and feelings. It goes beyond whatever the other has said to explain or connect ideas and events. Unlike clarification, this response adds something from your own thoughts, feelings, values, etc. It implies that you are wise, you know more than the other person. Under most circumstances the analytical response leads to resentment in others.

Analytical Response Examples:

- The reason you are having so much trouble with him is that he reminds you of your father.
- You often are late to work because you really don't feel comfortable here.
- You see her as an authority figure; that is why you can't relate to her.

The analytical response is appropriate for ongoing relationships built on mutual trust and respect. Even then it sometimes works better to use an information-giving response. Interpretation is a poor response to use in confronting a person with behaviour of which you disapprove.

7. Advice Giving:

Advice giving is usually unproductive. It implies that you are in a position to know the reasons for the other person's problems, and what they ought, must, or should do about them. You are, thus, judging the goodness, appropriateness, effectiveness, or correctness of the other's actions. Others are being measured by your personal value system and are found somehow lacking. This is a process of blaming others for their own problems.





Conclusions: Listening Is Less Important Than How You Listen

By listening in a way that demonstrates understanding and respect, you develop rapport, and that is the true foundation from which you can sell, service, manage or influence others.

1. **Give 100% Attention:** Prove you care by suspending all other activities.
2. **Respond:** Responses can be both verbal and nonverbal (nods, expressing interest) but must prove you received the message, and more importantly, prove it had an impact on you. Speak at approximately the same energy level as the other person...then they'll know they really got through and don't have to keep repeating. Diffuse by softening your tone.
3. **Prove understanding:** To say "I understand" is not enough. People need some sort of evidence or proof of understanding. Prove your understanding by occasionally restating the gist of their idea or by asking a question which proves you know the main idea. The important point is not to repeat what they've said to prove you were listening, but to prove you understand. The difference in these two intentions transmits remarkably different messages when you are communicating.
4. **Prove respect:** Prove you take sender's view seriously. It seldom helps to tell people, "I appreciate your position" or "I know how you feel." You have to prove it by being willing to communicate at their level of understanding and attitude. We do this naturally by adjusting our tone of voice, rate of speech, and choice of words to show that we are trying to imagine being where they are at the moment.

**Find the core of
the message...**

You feel...because

