

The Art of Listening

Trinity Care Team - July 2021

Let us pray . . .

Listening Lord, we pour out our hearts to you in praise, sorrow, profound need, or joyous thanksgiving. When we cry out, you are there for us—listening, caring, soothing and healing. Give us the patience, compassion and the skills we need to follow your example and be good listeners. Bless us through this time of learning; use it to equip us to listen well. Give us opportunities to listen to one another, and use our care to build bonds of Christian love among all people. Thank you for hearing and answering our prayers.

Amen.

Trinity Care Team Mission:

To be prayerful in all that we do as we offer support to our parishioners and beyond

- ▶ Trustworthy
- ▶ Compassionate
- ▶ Prayerful/Faithful
- ▶ Always maintaining confidentiality

On Listening: Some Conversation-Starters . . .

- Think of a time when you feel you were well-listened to . . .
And think of a time when you feel you were not . . .

So, What made the difference . . . ?

- How many think you are a good listener?
- How many think others are good listeners?
- What's the difference between “hearing” and “listening”?
- Who carries primary responsibility for a good conversation—

the speaker or the listener ?

So—what do you think God’s position is . . . ?

God listens to us . . .

- *Exodus 2:23-24: “. . . the Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob . . . ”*

We are called to be good listeners . . .

- More than just dispassionately “hearing”.
- Real listeners get involved.
- They share the journey with those they listen to.



This is the kind of listener God is—and wants us to be!



*You must understand this, my beloved:
let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak.*

-- James 1:19a NRSV

Good listening is compassionate listening . . .

Compassionate listening seeks to create emotional safety for a more thorough exploration of emotions and issues necessary for growth and healing. Listening begins with a genuine love and respect of others.

-- Rev. Dr. John P. Oliver, Chief of Chaplain Service
-- Durham VA Medical Center

True or False . . . ?

Sometimes you will learn more about someone's thoughts and feelings by his or her tone of voice or body language than you will from his or her actual words.

True or False . . . ?

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TRUE

True or False . . . ?

Long silences are destructive to caring listening and tend to erode trust in the listener.

True or False . . . ?

Long silences are destructive to caring listening and tend to erode trust in the listener.

FALSE

True or False . . . ?

An open-ended question is one for which there is simply no answer.

True or False . . . ?

An open-ended question is one for which there is simply no answer.

FALSE

True or False . . . ?

Active listening means carrying on a conversation while you are jogging or doing aerobics.

True or False . . . ?

Active listening means carrying on a conversation while you are jogging or doing aerobics.

FALSE

True or False . . . ?

Questions that begin with the word “why” can make people feel defensive.

True or False . . . ?

Questions that begin with the word why can make people feel defensive.

TRUE

A Little Demonstration . . .

What do you observe . . . ?

How To Be A Poor Listener: Bad Habits . . .

- Tolerate distractions (phone calls, text messages, background noise, interruptions, incomplete thoughts, etc.)
- Pretend to be paying attention
- Let your own biases and opinions get in the way when you don't agree—be preparing a rebuttal (“yeah-but”)
- Interrogate or probe: use the word “why” a lot
- Give advice: use the word “should” a lot

A(nother) Little Demonstration . . .

What do you observe this time . . . ?

How To Be A Good Listener—Good Habits . . .

- Find a quiet and safe place for the conversation—no responding to cellphone calls or other distractions
- Listen for facts and feelings—“words and music”
- Be aware of your own emotional reactions to what is being shared
- Repeat back what you hear, inviting clarity of meaning and further exploration
- Be okay with silence—and keep an ear open for the spirit of God
- Be aware of body language and tone of voice—theirs and yours—and what’s *not* being said

Practice SOLAR Listening . . .



Sit slightly forward

Maintain an **O**pen, relaxed posture

Look into the other person's eyes

Pay close **A**ttention to what the other person is saying so that you are able to . . .

Reflect what the other person says

The Listening Basics: Asking Questions

Closed

- sets up a one-word answer (“yes” or “no”)
- closes off discussion
- usually begins with “is”, “can”, or “does”

examples:

- *“do you understand the changes we’re discussing?”*
- *“is this what we want to be talking about right now?”*

Open-Ended

- sets up a more than a “yes” or “no” response
- stimulates thinking and dialogue
- usually begins with “what”, “how”, “when”, or “why”. (altho’ we recommend you avoid the use of “why” because it can make people feel defensive)

examples:

- *“what ideas do you have about approaching this situation differently?”*
- *“how did that make you feel?”*

The Listening Basics: Probing/Paraphrasing

Probing

- *for when you need more information*
- *for when you don't understand*

examples:

- *“tell me more about . . . ”*
- *“could you give me an example . . . ”*
- *“I'm not quite sure I understand . . . ”*

Paraphrasing

- *to make sure you have understood*
- *to summarize*

examples:

- *“what I'm hearing you say is . . . ”*
- *“it sounds like you're saying . . . ”*
- *“please correct me if I'm wrong—but . . . ”*

The Listening Basics: Listen for Feelings

It's important to respond to the emotion being expressed as well as the content. Acknowledging the feelings behind what is being expressed clears the path to effective communication. Responding with empathy doesn't mean that you necessarily agree with the feelings being expressed, only that you acknowledge the feelings that are being expressed.

examples:

- *“You must be frustrated by all of that . . .”*
- *“You seem really excited about this approach . . .”*
- *“It sounds like you gave the matter a lot of thought . . .”*
- *“I can see that you are angry . . .”*

The Listening Basics: “Non-Verbals”

To demonstrate that you are listening non-verbally involves subtle yet important behaviors. You “tell” people you are listening by voice inflection, a smile, a raised eyebrow, or countless other nuances of facial expression and body posture and movement.

Consider the following:

- *stop what you are doing and give the speaker your full attention—“lean in”*
- *make eye contact*
- *nod your head to show understanding (but don’t overdo it!)*
- *add appropriate conversation fillers (“hmm, uh-huh, etc.)*

The bottom line: good listening involves . . .

- asking questions
- listening for facts—probing and paraphrasing
- listening for feelings—listening empathetically
- listening non-verbally—eye contact, gestures, hmm’s, uh-huh’s, etc.

and

listening compassionately

A moment of personal reflection . . .

- **Think about a current or recent situation where the need to be a more skillful and compassionate listener might be helpful . . .**
- **Based on what we've covered in this session, what would you like to build into such a conversation in the future . . . more paraphrasing? more non-verbals? more silence? more compassion and empathy? etc.**

A final round of conversation . . .

Reflecting on our time together . . .

- *What is your single most key take-away learning from this session?*

Go Forth—

and Listen (!)