

## “ACTIVE LISTENING: A SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION”



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“It takes a great man to be a good listener.” – Calvin Coolidge

Imagine you are trying to convey something important to your friend and he/she is not paying attention towards you because of being involved in something else, you will surely feel annoyed with such kind of ignorance towards you. Knowingly or unknowingly, at some point of time, we all behave ignorantly towards others in our proximity. But not showing interest in ‘what and how’ it is being said leaves the speaker with a bad impression about the listener.

Being able to communicate effectively is perhaps the most important of all life skills. It is what enables us to pass information to other people, and to understand what is said to us. But, most people, most of the time, take listening for granted, it’s something that just happens. It is only when you stop to think about listening and what it entails that you begin to realise that listening is in fact an important skill that needs to be nurtured and developed.

A good listener will listen not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid or only partially said. Effective listening therefore involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages, as well as just what is being said at any given moment. For me, being in the profession of teaching and the urge of becoming a good communicator has always captivated my interest towards learning more and more about effective communication. Listening is therefore not just a matter of using your ears, but also your eyes. Some of the NPTEL courses are really good for learning about effective communication. I would like to share a few concepts of ‘listening’ which are mostly ignored in general communication.

### ◆ Ten Principles of Effective Listening

**1. Stop Talking:** Don't talk, listen.

When somebody else is talking, listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them.

**2. Prepare Yourself to Listen: Relax.**

Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind. The human mind is easily distracted by other thoughts - what's for lunch, is it going to rain - try to put other thoughts out of mind and concentrate on the messages that are being communicated.

**3. Put the Speaker at Ease: Help the speaker to feel free to speak.**

Remember their needs and concerns; Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact but don't stare - show you are listening and understanding what is being said.

**4. Remove Distractions: Focus on what is being said.**

**5. Empathise: Try to understand the other person's point of view.**

**6. Be Patient:** A pause, even a long pause, does not necessarily mean that the speaker has finished.

**7. Avoid Personal Prejudice: Try to be impartial.**

Don't become irritated and don't let the person's habits or mannerisms distract you from what the speaker is really saying.

**8. Listen to the Tone: Volume and tone both add to what someone is saying.**

**9. Listen for Ideas - Not Just Words:** You need to get the whole picture, not just isolated bits and pieces. Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information to reveal the ideas of others. With proper concentration, letting go of distractions, and focus this becomes easier.

**10. Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication:** Gestures, facial expressions, and eye-movements can all be important.

Thus, considering the above principles of listening in our day to day communication may surely enable us to have better standards of communication in our life.

*"If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear."*

*—Mark Twain*