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How would you feel if you shared a personal story and noticed that the person you were talking to wasn't actually listening? You probably wouldn't be happy. Unfortunately, that is the case for many people. Most individuals are not good listeners. They're good pretenders. The thing is, real listening requires work—more work than people are willing to invest. Quality conversation is about give and take. Most people, however, just want to give—their words, that is. On the receiving end as the listener may seem boring, but it is essential. When you are attending to someone and paying attention to what they are saying, it is a sign of care and respect. The hitch is that attending requires an act of will, which sometimes goes against what our mind naturally does—wandering around and thinking about what's not already, rather than listening—the greatest act of thoughtfulness. Without actively listening, people often feel unheard of and not recognized. That's why it's important that everyone learns how to be a better listener. What makes people poor listeners? Good listening skills can be learned, but first let's look at some of the things you might do that make you a bad listener.

1. Do you want to talk to yourself, who doesn't? We all have something to say, right? But when you look at someone who pretends to listen while, all the time, they mentally plan all the amazing things they're going to say, it's a disservice to the speaker. yes, maybe what the other one says isn't the most exciting thing in the world. Yet they deserve to be heard. You always have the ability to steer the conversation in a different direction by asking questions. It's okay to want to talk. In fact, it's normal. However, keep in mind that when it's your turn, you want someone to listen to you.
2. You don't agree with what is said. This is another thing that makes you an inadequate listener—hearing something with which you disagree with and immediately tune in. Then you lurk so you tell the speaker how wrong they are. You can't wait to make your point and prove the speaker wrong. You think that once you speak your truth, others will know how wrong the speaker is, thank you for correcting them, and encourage you to elaborate on what you have to say. Dream on. Disagreeing with your speaker, as frustrating as that might be, is no reason to tune them and get yourself ready to spew your giddy rebuttal. listen, you might actually have an interesting lump of information that you previously didn't know about. You do five other things while you listen! It's impossible to listen to someone while you're texting, reading, playing Sudoku, etc. But people do it all the time— I know I did it. I actually tried to balance my checkbook while pretending to listen to the person on the other line. It didn't work. I had to keep asking, what did you say? I can only admit this now because I rarely do it anymore. With work I managed to become a better listener. It requires a lot of concentration, but it's definitely worth it. If you're really going to listen, you have to: listen!

M. Scott Peck, MD, in his book *The Road Less Travel*, says: You don't really listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time. If you are too busy to actually listen, let the speaker know, and arrange for another time to talk. It's that simple!

4. You appoint yourself as a judge while you're listening, you decide the speaker doesn't know what they're talking about. As the expert, you know more. So, what's the point of even listening? For you, the only sound you hear once you decide they're wrong is Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah! But before you hit that hammer, you know you may not have all the information you need. To do that, you really have to listen, don't you? Also, make sure you don't judge someone by their accent, the way they sound, or the structure of their sentences. My dad's almost 91. His English is sometimes a bit broken and hard to understand. People wrongly assume that he doesn't know what he's talking about—they're completely wrong. My father is a very intelligent man who has English as a second language. He knows what he's saying and understands the language perfectly. Keep that in mind when listening to a foreigner, or someone who might have a difficult time putting their thoughts into words. You know a number of things that make for an inferior listener. If none of the above items resonate with you, great! You're a better listener than most. How To Be a Better Listener

For the interview, however, let's say that you may need some work in the listening department, and after reading this article, you make the decision to improve. So what are some of the things you have to do to make that happen? How can you be a better listener?

 1. Attention! A good listener is attentive. They don't look at their watch, phone, or think about their dinner plans. They're focused and paying attention to what the other person is saying. This is called active listening. According to Skills You Need, active listening involves listening with all the senses. In addition to giving full attention to the speaker, it is important that the 'active listener' is also 'seen' to listen—otherwise the speaker may conclude what they talk is uninteresting to the listener. Like I said, it's normal for the mind to wander around. After all, we're human. But a good listener will rein those thoughts back in once they notice their attention waning. I would like to note here that you also listen to physical signals. You assume that if someone keeps looking at their watch or over their shoulder, their focus is not on the conversation. The key is just to pay attention.
 2. Use positive body language! You divert a lot from a person's body language. Are they interested, bored or anxious? The body language of a good listener is open. They lean forward and express curiosity in what is being said. Their facial expression is either smiling, showing concern, conveying empathy, etc. They let the speaker know they're being heard. People say things for a reason: they want some kind of feedback. For example, you tell your spouse, I had a really hard day! and your husband continues to check his newsfeed while nodding his head. Not a good response. But what if your man looks up with questioning eyes, puts down his phone and says, Oh, no. What happened? How would you feel? The answer is obvious. According to Alan Gurney, An active listener pays full attention to the speaker and makes sure they understand the information being provided. You won't be distracted by an incoming call or a Facebook status update. You have to be present and in the moment. Body language is an important tool to make sure you do this. The right body language makes you a better active listener and therefore more 'open' and receptive to what the speaker says. At the same time, it indicates that you are listening to them.
 3. Avoid interrupting the Speaker! I'm sure you wouldn't want to be in the middle of a sentence just to see the other person holding up a finger or their mouth open, ready to step into your unfinished verbiage. It's rude and causes fear. You would, more than likely, feel the need to rush what you say just to finish your sentence. Interrupting is a sign of disrespect. It's essentially saying, what I have to say is much more important than what you're saying. When you interrupt the speaker, they feel frustrated, rushed and unimportant. Interrupting a speaker to agree, disagree, argue, etc., causes the speaker to lose sight of what they say. It's very frustrating. Whatever you have to say can wait until the other person is ready. Be polite and wait your turn!
 4. Asking questions Asking Questions Asking is one of the best ways to show that you are interested. If someone tells you about their ski trip to Mammoth, don't respond with it, that's nice. That show a lack of interest and lack of respect. Instead, you might ask, How long have you been skiing? Did you find it hard to learn? What was your favorite part of the trip? Etc. The person will think highly of you and consider you a great conversationalist just by asking a few questions.
 5. Just Listen This may seem counterintuitive. When you talk to someone, it's usually back and forth. Sometimes, all you are required to hear, smile, or nod your head, and your speaker will feel like they are really being heard and understood. I once sat with a client for 45 minutes without saying anything. She came into my office in distress. I let her sit down, and then she started crying softly. I sat with her—that's all I did. At the end of the session, she stood up, told me she was feeling much better, and then left. I have to admit, 45 minutes without saying a word was hard. But she didn't need me to say anything. She needed a safe space in which she could emote without interruption, judgment, or me trying to fix something.
 6. Remember and Follow Up Part of a great listener is to remember what the speaker has said to you and then follow up with them. For example, in a recent conversation you had with your colleague Jacob, he told you that his wife had received a promotion and that they were considering moving to New York. Next time you run into Jacob, you might want to say, Hey, Jacob! What happened to your wife's promotion? At this point, Jacob will know that you really heard what he said and that you are interested to see how things have ended. What a gift! According to new research, people who ask questions, especially follow-up questions, can be better managers, land better jobs, and even win second dates. It's so simple to show that you care. Think of a few facts and follow up on them. If you do this regularly, you'll make more friends.
 7. Keep confidential information If you really want to be a better listener, listen carefully. If what you hear is confidential, keep it that way, no matter how tempting it is to tell someone else, especially if you have friends in common. Being a good listener means being trustworthy and sensitive with shared information. What you are told in confidence must not be revealed. Assure your speaker that their information is safe with you. They'll be relieved to have someone they can share their burden with without fear of it coming out. Someone's trust helps you deepen your relationship. Also, one of the most important elements of confidentiality is that it helps build and develop trust. It allows the free flow of information between the customer and employee and recognizes that the personal life of a customer and all the problems and problems they have belong to them. Be like a therapist: listen and withhold judgment. NOTE: I add here that while therapists keep everything in one session confidential, there are exceptions: If the client can be an immediate danger to themselves or others, if the client endangers a population that cannot protect itself, such as in the case of child abuse or elder abuse.
 8. Maintain eye contact When someone talks, they usually say something they find meaningful. They don't want their listener reading a text, looking at their nails, or bending down to pet a pooch on the street. A speaker wants all eyes on them. It lets them know that what they say has value. Eye contact is very powerful. It can pass on a lot of things without saying anything. Today, it's more important than ever with the Covid-19 Pandemic. People can't see your whole face, but they can definitely read your eyes. By eye contact I don't mean a hard, creepy look—just a look in the direction the speaker will do. Next time you're in conversation, make it a point to maintain eye contact with your speaker. Avoid the temptation to look anywhere except at their face. I know it's not easy, especially if you're not interested in what they're talking about. But like I said, you lead the conversation in a different direction or let the person know you have to go. Last thoughts Decided will add attentively to your connection with everyone in your life. Now, more than ever, when people are so disconnected from smartphones and social media, listening skills are crucial. Build better, fairer and deeper relationships by just being there, paying attention and asking questions that make the speaker feel that what they have to say matters. And isn't that a great goal? To make people feel like they matter? So, go outside and start sharpening those listening skills. You have two great ears. Use them now!

More tips on How to Be a Better Listener

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