

## *What affects listening?*

**Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to,**

whether in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what he or she is saying.

As the listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with the person, but rather understand what they are saying.

What do you think of the subject matter?

Have you a lot of experience with it?

Will it be hard to understand, or simple?

Is it important to you, or just fun?

Is the speaker experienced or nervous?

What are his/her non-verbal cues?

What frame of mind is he or she?

How personable, threatening, intelligent, etc.?



Is the message illustrated with  
with visuals or examples?

Is technology used effectively?

Are concepts introduced incrementally,  
or with examples?

Is the space conducive to listening?

or to interaction or exchange  
with the speaker?

Are there avoidable distractions?

*Described above are the external factors.*

*Now: what about you, the center, the listener?*

***Prepare with a positive, engaged attitude***

- Focus your attention on the subject
- Stop all non-relevant activities beforehand to orient yourself to the speaker or the topic
- Review mentally what you already know about the subject
- Organize in advance relevant material in order to develop it further (previous lectures, TV programs, newspaper articles, web sites, prior real life experience, etc.)
- Avoid distractions
- Seat yourself appropriately close to the speaker
- Avoid distractions (a window, a talkative neighbor, noise, etc.)
- Acknowledge any emotional state
- Suspend emotions until later, or
- Passively participate unless you can control your emotions
- Set aside your prejudices, your opinions
- You are present to learn what the speaker has to say, not the other way around

***Actively listen***

- Be other-directed; focus on the person communicating
- Follow and understand the speaker as if you were walking in their shoes
- Listen with your ears but also with your eyes and other senses
- Be aware: non-verbally acknowledge points in the speech
- Let the argument or presentation run its course
- Don't agree or disagree, but encourage the train of thought
- Be involved:
- Actively respond to questions and directions
- Use your body position (e.g. lean forward) and attention to encourage the speaker and signal your interest

***Follow up activities***

**One-to-one**

Give the speaker time and space for rest after talking

Express appreciation for the sharing to build trust and encourage dialogue

**Check if you have understood**

- Restate key points to affirm your understanding & build dialogue
- Summarize key points to affirm your understanding & build dialogue
- Ask (non-threatening) questions to build understanding

**Continue dialogue:**

- Reflect on your experience to demonstrate your interest (feedback)
  - Interpret after you feel you have grasped content
  - Apply what you have learned to a new situation.
- In a group or audience give the speaker space to regroup, to debrief after talking

## ***During Q & A***

### **If posing a question**

- Quickly express appreciation
- Briefly summarize a preliminary point
- Ask the relevant question

### **If making a point**

- Quickly express appreciation
- Briefly restate the relevant idea as presented
- State your idea, interpretation, reflection
- Invite a response

### **Continued development**

- Get contact information for later reference
- Invite friends/colleagues/etc. for discussion afterward
- Write out a summary with questions for further review