

Listen! ... and allow people to feel good in your presence

Over 80% of our success in learning from other people is based upon how well we listen.
Success or failure is determined before we do anything.

Good listeners, quite simply, have some good habits they have picked up over the years and follow carefully. Good listeners would tell you:

Think before you speak

- keep your ears open and mouth shut
- listening is actually a two part maneuver
 - the part where we listen
 - the part where we speak
- speaking establishes how we are received as a listener
- what we say is proof of how well we listen

Telling your brain and mouth not to do something is no different than telling them to do it.

Listen with respect

- to learn from people you have to listen to them with respect.
- It is not enough to keep our ears open. We have to demonstrate that we are totally engaged

When listening to someone talk, listen as if they were the only person around you. With every fibre of your being, from your eyes to body language, communicate that you are locked into what they are saying.

Ask yourself “Is it worth it?” (to interrupt the speaker)

- the trouble with listening, for many, is that while they’re supposed to be listening, they’re actually busy composing what they’re going to say next
- they are not only failing to hear the other person, they are orchestrating a comment that may end up annoying the person speaking, either because it misses the point, adds meaningless value to the discussion or, worst of all, injects a destructive tone into the mix.
- Asking “Is it worth it?” forces one to consider what the other person will feel after hearing your response.
- It forces you to play at least two moves ahead – not many people do that – you talk, they talk – so on.
- When you respond without asking “Is it worth it?” (interrupting the speaker), people not only think you don’t listen, but you have instigated a three part chain of events ...
 - they are hurt
 - they harbor ill feelings
 - they are less likely to speak up next time

Once you show yourself as being a poor listener ... people won’t perform for you. They’ll stop giving you ideas.

People’s opinions about our listening ability are largely shaped by the decisions we make, immediately after asking “Is it worth it?”

- do we speak or shut up?
- do we argue or simply say “thank you”?

- do we add our needless two cents worth or bite our tongue?

If you think it's worth it to interrupt or interject, ... speak freely.

The implications for listening are profound and go beyond listening. Questions of self interest ... "what's in it for me? ... "what's in it for him?". Suddenly you begin to see the bigger picture.

When you ask a question Wait for the answer. You not only are considered a listener, you make the person feel like they are the one who's important. In showing interest, asking questions and listening for the answers without distractions, is a skill that can make one a great success. The ability to make a person feel special, when you are that person, he or she is the most important (and only) person in the room, is the skill that separates the great from the near great.. It's the skill that defines you. The great ones do this all the time – automatic – everyone is treated equally.

Why don't we do it ?

- we forget
- we get distracted
- we don't have the mental discipline

Here are some suggestions ... strong and right to the point ...

Listen

Don't interrupt

Don't finish the other person's sentences

Don't say "I know that"

Don't ever argue with the other person – even if you are praised, just say "thank you"

Don't use the words "no", "but" and "however"

Don't be distracted – don't let your eyes wander elsewhere while the other person is talking

Maintain your end of the dialogue by asking intelligent questions that:

- show you are paying attention
- move the conversation
- require the other person to talk (while you listen)

Eliminate any striving to impress the other person with how smart or funny you are. Your only aim is to let the other person feel that he or she is special.

Paradox: the more you resist your desire to shine, the more you will shine in the eyes of the other person. Do it! ... all the time.

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Epilogue:

What it means to be heard ...

Personal growth is a self creative process. It's like cutting your own hair. Listening is the mirror. There is no other place in their lives where people are heard like they are heard when they talk with you.