

The Art of Adult Listening

"We were given two ears but only one mouth, because listening is twice as hard as talking."

Some listening mishaps...	Some things to try...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being preoccupied with other things• Attempting to look at or do something else simultaneously• Attending only enough so that we can make our next point• Wanting their speaking pace to meet our needs• Taking the words at "face value"• Paying little attention to nonverbal cues• Expecting the messages to be of a "status quo" nature• Evaluating or making judgments about the speaker or the message• Formulating our own rebuttal while the speaker is speaking• Not asking for clarification when we do not understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn to bring as much energy to listening as you do to speaking• Establish routine checks to monitor listening behaviors• Inform others when you need them as listeners.• Learn to observe listening behaviors and their effects• Increase awareness of selective listening• Make conscious attempts to remove barriers to effective listening• Learn to attend to nonverbal messages• Listen for the intent or purpose of a message• Listen for what the speaker is thinking and /or feeling, from their perspective• Paraphrase what the speaker has said to ensure your understanding

The Three Basic Listening Modes

1. **Competitive or Combative Listening** happens when we are more interested in promoting our own point of view than in understanding or exploring someone else's view. We either listen for openings to take the floor, or for flaws or weak points we can attack. As we pretend to pay attention we are impatiently waiting for an opening, or internally formulating our rebuttal and planning our devastating comeback that will destroy their argument and make us the victor.

2. In **Passive or Attentive Listening** we are genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the other person's point of view. We are attentive and passively listen. We assume that we heard and understand correctly, but stay passive and do not verify it.

3. **Active or Reflective Listening** is the single most useful and important listening skill. In active listening we are also genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message means, and we are active in checking out our understanding before we respond with our own new message. We restate or paraphrase our understanding of their message and reflect it back to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.

Resources:

Lee P. (1999). Effective Communication: Collaborative Practices for Educators. Minnetonka, MN: Betrayal Publications, Inc.

Nadig, Larry. (8/3/2008 download). Tips on Effective Listening.
<http://www.drnadig.com/listening.htm>