

Listening - Superpower

a OnePageBook™



Tune in, really understand

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At school we were all taught the basics of reading and writing. However, it is rare to see a student walking into the Listening class. What training did you have where you learned how to listen in order to understand?

Most people are so focused on trying to be understood that they often forget to attempt to understand. Just like when we introduce ourselves to new people, we are often so focused on saying our own name that we don't really listen for the other person's name. A little later we ask, "What was your name again?" If we dare.

Stephen Covey, points out in his book, "7 Habits of Highly Effective People": Seek first to understand then to be understood (Habit 5).

The purpose of listening is to understand. It is not to merely figuring out a good come-back. Positive human interaction is based upon understanding. Understanding is achieved by listening. And by listening, we mean with all your senses.

Your listening superpower depends on you being fully mentally present¹. When you are free from your own chaotic mind, you can focus your perceptions on the person in front of you. You can tune in completely in order to clearly understand the other person.

Don't multitask when you listen. Empty your mind and truly get what the other person is saying. And don't interrupt.

It is bad enough to interrupt when another person is talking. It is even worse to interrupt when the other is thinking. It is harder to repeat a thinking process than to simply repeat something already said or partly said.

Be curious and interested. Being interested is the opposite of being interesting. When you are interested, you give attention. When you are interesting, you claim attention. To be interested requires empathy. To be interesting requires showmanship. Some people have a hard time giving attention and especially with genuine empathy. Some have a hard time enduring the silence when another is thinking. Master this by training yourself to sit still, be still, be interested, caring and try your hardest to understand.

Be interested enough to ask the person questions in order to understand better. And the best questions to ask are open rather than closed.

A closed question can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no," while open questions require more thought and more than a simple one-word answer.

Open questions are used to jump into another person's head to get the information you are looking for. These type of questions usually start with What, Where, When, How, Which. "What do you think about...?" Closed questions are used to confirm what another person has told you. These type of questions may start with Do, Can, Will, Have, Are, Is. "Do you think...?"

Whenever you ask a closed question you need to realise that you are in fact making assumptions. You have already created a set of possible answers in our own minds. If you are not aware of this, your experience may lead you to unconscious assumptions where you should seek understanding.

No matter what the person replies, respect the person's answer. You may not agree or find the answer logical, relevant or nice. But respect the answer before you decide to counter it with your own view.

Apart from the obvious action of acknowledging what you hear, how do you get across that you understand the other person?

1. Reflect emotions
2. Ask good questions
3. Rephrase content

By doing this you increase your chances of hearing, "Finally someone who understands me."

How do you reflect emotions? You listen with all your senses, observe the mood and relate to those emotions. You get on the other's wavelength, you get close to the person and convey your empathy. If you encounter a sad person, you can open the conversation simply by saying "I can see that you are sad." Observe and be honest about what you see.

How do you ask good questions? Ask mostly open questions. Confirm with closed questions. Ask questions in order to understand rather than to poke hole in arguments or make yourself look smart.

How do you rephrase content? Discuss with the other person what you heard, but in your own words.

By combining these 3 points and by being 100% mentally present you can really listen and get to truly understand other people. Practice your superpower daily.

¹ For the basic ability to be completely here and now, read "Mental training – The core" (<https://isene.me/onepagebooks/>)

Sharpen your superpower with this OnePageBook™ – listen, and listen good.

The authors help people to get a better grip of life – from professional to family life. One of the most important skills in life is the ability to truly listen. When you can master this essential superpower, then you can really begin to understand others.

The author's company "Å" (A-Circle AS) carries the apt slogan, "Boosting performance".

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"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."
(Stephen R. Covey)

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