

HOW TO BE A GOOD LISTENER

- **STOP TALKING** – You can't listen while you are talking.
- **EMPATHIZE** – Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- **MAKE UNDERSTANDING YOUR GOAL** – Make it your business to find out what the other person in the conversation is saying, meaning and feeling. Don't pretend to be interested. Really make *understanding* your primary goal. Try on what they are saying like you would try on a suit of clothes. See how it fits and feels. Your job is not to discover who is right or wrong, what makes sense or doesn't make sense, but rather to get a clear picture of ideas and feelings.
- **ASK QUESTIONS** – Ask questions that prompt the giving of more information and detail. Ask for clarification, missing pieces and specificity. Avoid questions that begin with "Why". Make sure your questions aren't cleverly disguised statements containing your judgment of that person. Avoid embarrassing questions that begin with "How could you possibly...?"
- **LISTEN TO THE ANSWERS GIVEN IN RESPONSE** - Give the person time to say what needs to be said, without interruption. Concentrate on what is being said and not on the internal dialogue you are having with yourself. Also, do not be formulating your retort before they have finished.
- **LOOK AT THE OTHER PERSON** – Establish eye contact without staring.
- **PROVIDE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF YOUR ATTENTIVENESS** – Ongoing and appropriate confirmation of your attention includes nods, smiles, uh-huh's and empathetic sounds. If your acknowledgment is sincere, you won't be "overdoing" it.
- **ACTIVE LISTENING** – Check your understanding by repeating back the main points as you've heard them. "This is what I understand you to be saying...is that an accurate reading?" Avoid acting on assumptions before checking out their validity.
- **LISTEN FOR WHAT IS MISSING** – What information or emotion has been left out that could give you a clearer picture? "So that's the situation...How do you feel about it?"
- **BE AWARE OF YOUR IMPACT** – Notice if you are antagonizing or intimidating the other person by arguing, criticizing, staring intently, asking pointed questions, taking notes or frowning your brow, etc. Stop and reiterate your sincere desire to understand their point of view or emotion.
- **REMEMBER THAT EVERYONE IS UNIQUE** – Sometimes we take shortcuts to understanding another person by classifying or labeling them and then predicting how they will think, act, feel or respond. This prediction may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Avoid labeling others in your own mind. Be open.