

HOW TO BE A GOOD LISTENER

EFFECTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

A good listener listens with the intention of understanding and uses the techniques outlined below to do this:

Be calm

If you're tired and stressed, it's hard to focus your attention on what someone else is saying and to absorb all the relevant information. A useful strategy is to take 5 minutes to clear your mind before attending a meeting or interview or engaging in an important conversation. (Breathing or relaxation techniques can be very helpful).

Be fully present

This requires the listener to give their full attention to the speaker and be genuinely interested in what they have to say. Maintaining eye contact shows the speaker that they have your attention. If you let your mind wander or only listen selectively, you're likely to appear disinterested and miss important details.



Be respectful

Be patient and courteous and let the speaker finish what they have to say without interrupting. Only give advice when someone specifically asks for it. If you assume you know what the other person's going to say and finish their sentences for them, or act like you know better and contradict, interrupt and tell the speaker what you think they should do, you will appear very disrespectful. The Greek philosopher, Epictetus said: "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much

as we speak." To state the obvious, good listeners listen more than they talk.

It's also important to be conscious of your tone of voice when speaking and your non-verbal communication. Disrespect can be communicated through a sarcastic or disparaging tone of voice, facial expressions or posture.

Be curious

If you're not sure that you fully understand what's been said, ask for more information using courteous and information-seeking

questions. A challenging or confrontational questioning style makes it obvious you disagree with the speaker

and creates a barrier to effective communication.

Listen with empathy

In his book, "The 7 Habits of highly effective people", Steven Covey advises us to "seek first to be understood, then to be understood." Effective listeners genuinely try to see the world from the other person's point of view to understand what their issues and concerns are, listening with an open mind and suspending judgement, even if the views expressed are quite different from their own.

Benefits of being a good listener

Effective listening is a key skill in a manager's toolbox. When your team members feel heard and understood, you'll be able to build strong working relationships, drive high performance and resolve problems or conflicts more easily.

