

LISTENING WITHIN GROUP SOCIAL MENTORING



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Lifelong Learning Programme

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INNOVATIVE METHODS AND PRACTICES TO FACILITATE SOCIAL INCLUSION

God has given us two ears, but one tongue,
to show that we should be swift to hear,
but slow to speak.

A good companion is not the one, who has
something interesting and special to say,
but the one, who makes his companion
special...



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“Chinese whispers” (the Broken Telephone game)



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What is the difference between listening and hearing?

If you hear what others say, it does not necessarily mean that you are listening what they are saying. But, if you do not hear what they are saying to you when you are listening, it means that in fact you are not listening to them at all...

- **Hearing** – physiological process (ear, different frequencies, etc.)
- **Listening** – psychological process (concentration of your attention, focusing on your companion)



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Listening ≠ breathing

- Whereas listening is a psychological process, you need to **learn** it. Becoming a good and valuable listener takes a lot of time and practice. However, those who become good listeners, are not prone to conflicts and are better at settling them.
- Listening is a very **active process**: your heart rate, breathing and even body temperature raises. This way listening may be compared to some kind of physical work.



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Listening

- Talking and listening are the main tools, helping to understand other people's feelings and letting to express ours. These tools help different people to exchange the information and solve the problems occurring while communicating.

Listening:

- is the ability to maintain attentive silence, not interrupting while your companion is speaking.
- is the ability to see the existing situation from the point of view of other person, to feel the empathy, to let other person see the inner you, to let him/her into your inside world and make the place for him/her in it. For this, you only need to quiet down your inner voice, your egocentric spring.



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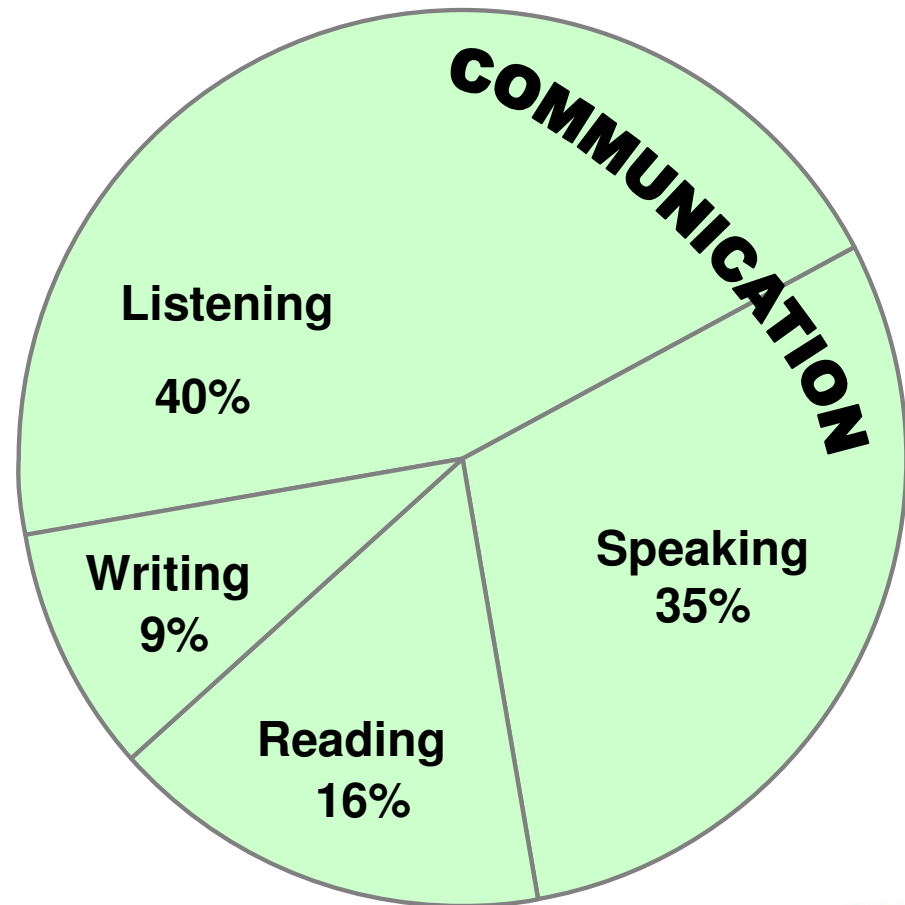
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- Not being able to listen is one of the main reasons of ineffective communication.

This particular reason often leads to misunderstandings, mistakes and problems, which may become not only dangerous, but also fatal. According to M. Burcley-Allen (1997), listening takes the most of the time in communication.



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Inner reasons for not listening (1)

- the information is not interesting for us;
- we are thinking about problems, things of greater importance for us;
- we are tired;
- we are excited;
- we are just too lazy to listen, listening is a very hard work, which needs patience.



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Inner reasons for not listening (2)

We can also name a person as a poor listener, who:

- always shows himself/herself as a specialist of every debated topic and always has in advance prepared answers to all the questions;
- is not listening to other people's criticisms related to him/her and is wildly reacting to any of them;
- is not listening just because he/she does not know HOW to listen. After all, listening is a skill, which develops while the personality is forming. Therefore, if a person from his early childhood sees only the examples of low communication culture, he/she is misguided by false conclusions: if a person is silent – that means he/she is listening, if one out voiced other person – means he/she proved his/her truth, etc.;
- has a negative attitude towards the speaker, which does not let him/her concentrate and listen to what is being said and raises the desire to replicate. Only an intellectual and well educated person respects the opinion of others, even if it's totally opposite to his/her opinion or attitude;
- is prone to estimate. Everything, which is heard and seen is estimated, because usually it is related to the listener in one way or another. Such reaction of overall estimation is based on personal beliefs and may become a serious disturbance in the ability to listen.



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Outer reasons for not listening

- your companion is talking too quietly;
- you are talking in a noisy environment;
- you are constantly interrupted by telephone calls;
- you are disturbed by inadequate temperature, accommodation or even the color of the walls in the room, etc.
- you may be disturbed by the appearance of your companion, his/her gestures, mime, the manner of speaking (accent, monotony, even gum chewing);
- inadequacy between the speed of speech and the mental activity of the listener may impede ones listening, especially when the speech is slow and not interesting for the listener.
 - Usually we pronounce 125 words a minute, however a listener is able to understand even a faster speech.

The elements of effective listening:

- do not interrupt the speaking person;
- wait until the speaker finishes his speech;
- try to fathom the essence of the communicated thought;
- do not reply instantly after the sentence has been finished. It might appear that the speaker intends to tell you the most important or even personal information at the end of your conversation.



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Active listening is the main factor needed for understanding your companion or resolving a conflict.

If you wish to communicate more effectively, pay attention to the following:

- Effective communication depends on all persons taking part in the process;
- Seeking for the effective communication, you should apply both verbal and non-verbal ways of communication;
- Words do not always reflect the essence of the provided information. Even silence is a form of communication;
- Avoid one way communication.

Be active listeners

Most of the people are passive listeners.

- You are able to reflect upon and weigh the content of the speech only when you are listening to it. The feedback is only possible when you have some kind of information. You do not need to beat yourself to death trying to remember all the facts, which are being mentioned.
- If you wish to be an active listener, you should react to the situation emotionally meaning that you are not only hearing what your companion is telling you, but also reacting emotionally to his speech, sort of interrupting into it through your visible emotions.



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The styles of listening

- *Listener – pretender*
- *Self-exploring listener*
- *Prowling listener*
- *Selective listener*
- *Assertive listener*
- *Listener – echo*
- *Listener – mirror*
- *Reflective listener*
- *Empathic listener*
- *Emotional listener*
- *Analyzing listener*
- *Inadequate listener*
- *Harsh listener*



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The influence of a person's status and gender to the listening

- A person's position influences listening
 - Usually we listen to people with a higher position or status more attentively than to others, especially when we want to benefit from them.
- There is a difference between men's and women's listening; sometimes women's and men's styles of listening are differentiated.
- The style of listening depends on various factors: character, interests, status, profession, etc.

Good listeners, while listening to others:

- are trying to find interesting and valuable information for themselves;
- are realizing their own attitudes and restrain from “sentencing” their companions;
- are trying to separate their emotions from facts;
- are more eager to trust the essential ideas and thoughts rather than separate facts;
- are observing the non-verbal communication of the speaker – gestures, mime, listen to the manner of speech;
- A good listener becomes like a mirror, reflecting what the speaker is feeling or saying and never “swallows the speaker’s bait”, meaning that he/she never gets angry, takes offence at the speaker, does not come to hasty conclusions.
- A good listener is always listening actively.



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Active listening

There are 2 kinds of active listening:

- *Non-reflective* listening
- *Reflective* listening.



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Active listening

1. Non-reflective listening

We are not interrupting the speaking person, we keep attentively silent or we interrupt with short remarks („is it?“, „wow!“, „I understand“, „That’s interesting!“, „Could you explain that?“, etc.).

Such kind of listening is appropriate, when:

- The listener is of a higher status than the speaker;
- The speaker has deep feelings or is very emotional (furious, sad, etc.);
- The speaker is eager to explain his views towards certain things. He/she wants to talk to somebody, discuss important personal matters;
- The speaker finds it hard to express his thoughts, he/she stutters.

Active listening

2. Reflective listening

When we are listening reflectively we show our companion that we are listening:

- **We double-check**, if we have understood everything correctly: „Do you understand the problem this way?“; „Could you please explain, how do you understand the issue?...“;
- **We rephrase** his thoughts, while concentrating on the facts and showing that we have understood the essence: „As I have understood, the problem is ... (we describe it in our own words); „Have I understood correctly?...“; „I think, that you’ve said....“
- **We summarize** the main ideas of the conversation, this way kind of preparing for the following step in the conversation: „The essence of the issue is...“; „and now let’s double-check: we have discussed those facts...“; „In my conclusion I want to say, that...“.
- **We reflect the emotions of the speaker**: „Do you think you were ill-treated?“; „I feel that you want to get this job, but you just don’t know how to do it“. It is not recommended to use such soothing but meaningless phrases as: „Hey look, everything is not so bad...“; „It’s going to better tomorrow“;



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Effective listening

- is an active process, which demands a lot of attention and constant efforts. You should remember, that for the effective listening you should be actively engaged into conversation: a talk-active companion – is not necessary a bad listener;
- is a way to inform the speaking person, that their thoughts is worth listening to and that both parties of the communication respect and are able to pay attention to each other.



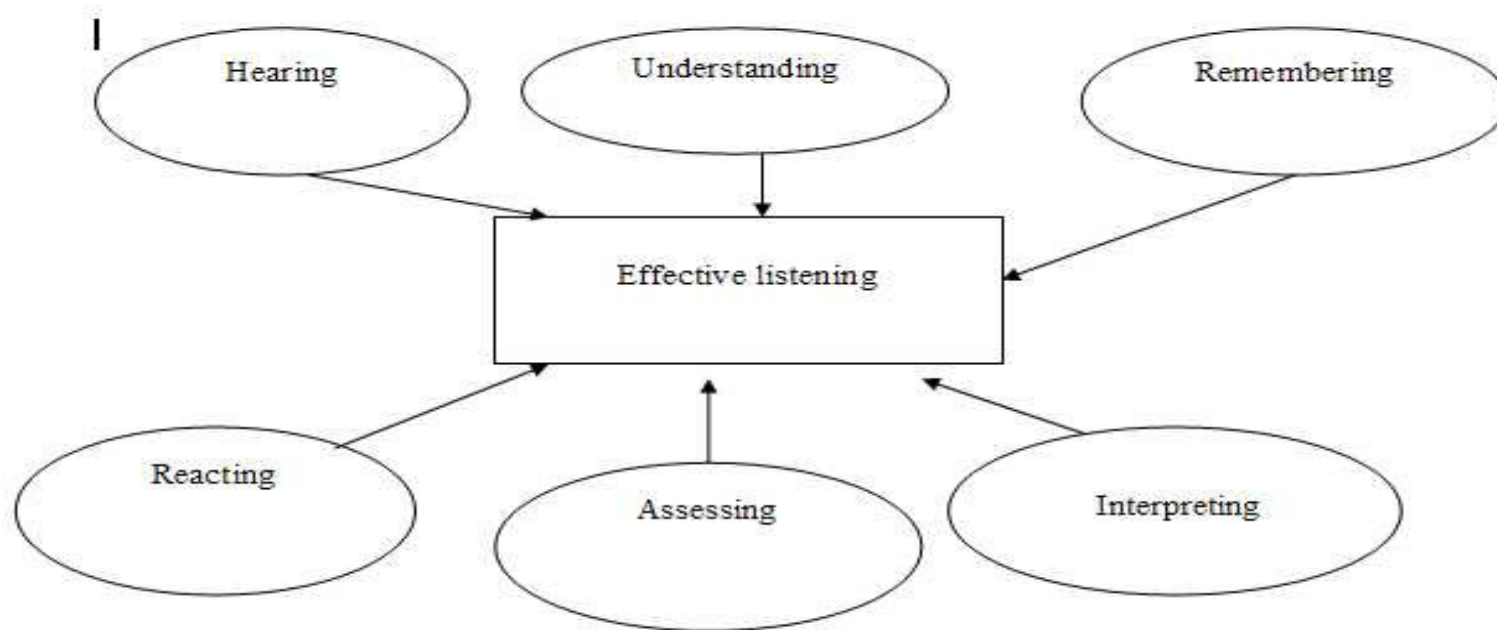
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Hearing means constant concentration on the other person, „catching“ various sounds with the ears and transferring them to our brain.

Understanding – is the realization of the message;

Remembering - is an ability to repeat the message;

Interpreting – is an ability to penetrate more than being said;

Assessing – the opinion expressed not instantly, just after the message has been contemplated upon and decision has been made;

Reacting – is showing the sender the attentiveness and concentration of the recipient.

The techniques of active listening (1)

Mute answers (including body language):

- A nod
- A smile at the proper moment
- Eye contact
- Gestures

Encouraging verbal words:

- Yes
- Mhm
- Correct



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The techniques of active listening (2)

„Door openers“ — words, which motivate others to speak:

- Please, go on
- Tell me about that
- You said, that

Specification of what has been said, while rephrasing the content of the conversation into one's own words:

- Are you saying, that
- Does it mean, that

What is the benefit of active listening?

- You let your mentees understand that you are interested in what they are saying.
- The mentees are encouraged to realize their problems and make decisions.
- You let your mentees realize, that you are not only listening, but you also understand what they are saying.
- It helps you (the mentor) to check your ability to understand.

The rules of proper listening (1)

1. Be quiet while other person is speaking.
2. Do not interrupt the speaker until he/she finishes his/her thought.
3. Show your interest (with your look, body position, temper of your voice).
4. Show, that you have understood what has been said: nod, if you agree, smile, if it is pleasant, etc.
5. Have a purpose while listening. Ask yourself: “What do I want to hear?”
6. Listen actively. Active listening needs physical, mental and emotional efforts, it is a hard work.
7. Listen while making a note of:
 - a) what is being said during the introduction (what the issue is going to be about);
 - b) main propositions;
 - c) how the speaker proves and reasons his/her propositions.

! Never try to put everything down: you will drown yourself in details and will loose the whole essence.

The rules of proper listening (2)

8. Sum up, what the speaker has said. Always remember the main thought and link the main words to it. Yes, it is possible - the speed of thought is 3-4 times faster than speed of speech.
9. Listen objectively. Ask yourself: "Is it right?", "Is it clear?". If you think too much, you won't understand the speaker anymore.
10. Listen patiently. If you disagree with the speaker, let him finish and ask to specify.
11. Listen while questioning. If you want to specify something, rephrase the speaker's words.

"If I have understood you correctly, ..."

"That means, that you think, that ..."

"It was interesting to hear your remarks. I would like to specify...". If you want to contradict, do it politely.

"Correct me, if I'm wrong, but ..."

"Maybe I haven't understood correctly, but to my mind..."

12. Agree with the speaker by giving your examples, but do not let yourself immerse into commenting.