

How to Listen

1. **Stop talking: To others and to yourself.** Learn to still the voice within. You can't listen if you are talking.
2. **Imagine the other person's point of view.....**step into his or her shoes.
3. **Look, act and BE interested.**
4. **Observe nonverbal behavior.**
5. **Don't interrupt.** Sit still past your tolerance level.
6. **Listen between the lines.** Ask questions to understand further.
7. **Speak only affirmatively while listening.** Resist the temptation to jump in with an evaluation, critical or disparaging comment. Confine yourself to constructive replies until the context has shifted and criticism can be offered without blame.
8. **Ensure you understand** by rephrasing key points and checking to see that you got it right.
9. **Stop talking.** This is the first and last, because all other techniques of listening depend on it. Take a vow of silence once in a while.

From The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook, Peter Senge, et al, 1994

Skillful Discussion

1. Pay Attention to Your Intentions

Make sure you understand and what you hope to accomplish. Ask yourself, *What is my intention, and am I willing to be influenced?*

2. Balance Advocacy with Inquiry

The goal of a balanced conversation is to create a context that allows you to learn more about others' views, while they learn more about yours. To balance advocacy with inquiry, lay out your reasoning and thinking, and then encourage others to challenge you. *Here is my view and how I arrived at it. How does it sound to you? What makes sense and what doesn't? Do you see ways I can improve it?*

3. Build Shared Meaning

All words are symbols. They often have different meanings to different people. It is important to use language with great precision, making evident the meaning – or lack thereof – in a word. If a word is important, check to ensure that everyone has the same understanding of it.

4. Use self-awareness as a resource

If you feel confused, angry, frustrated, concerned, or troubled...ask yourself: *What am I thinking? (pause) What am I feeling? (pause) What do I want in this moment?*

5. Explore Impasses

Ask yourself, *What do we agree on and what do we disagree on? Can you pinpoint the source of your disagreement: does it lie in the facts or data, the methods, your goals, or your values?*

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