

10 Ways To Be A Good Listener

1. **Make Eye Contact** - The first step in being a good listener is to make eye contact with people while they are talking. Good eye contact demonstrates genuine interest in the person and the conversation.

2. **Be Present** - I must admit I have been accused at times by my wife of not being present when she is talking even though I am looking into her eyes. These are times when my mind is thinking about something other than what she is talking about. I can only assume others have noticed, but perhaps at the risk of offending me, they have not said anything. The key here is to be aware that people do notice if we are not really listening. And so we must focus on the discussion and not allow our minds to wander.

3. **Give NO Sign You are Ready to Respond** - When you are listening, don't give any clues that you are ready to respond. Don't point your finger and don't open your mouth. When I talk to people and I see that they are waiting on *pins and needles* to respond, I know they are no longer listening because they are more concerned with how they are going to respond than with listening to what I have to say.

4. **Wait Two Seconds to Respond** - During a conversation, wait two seconds after the person finishes speaking to make sure they have finished their thought. This is especially important when talking on the phone, because you can't see their facial expression. Often times they are just pausing to gather their thoughts and are not really finished speaking. If you find yourself talking at the same time someone else is talking, then use that opportunity to remind yourself of the "*pause two seconds*" rule.

5. **Let Them Go First** - If you start talking at the same time someone else is trying to finish their thought, STOP and say, "I'm sorry, please continue" and let them finish before responding. Even if what you have to say is important or it's an answer to the question they raised, show them your respect by letting them finish. I certainly notice when people allow me to complete my sentences without "over talking" or interrupting. Do you?

6. **Care About What's Being Said** - This is where my dad stands out from most people. When he listens he really cares about what is being said, even if it's a subject that doesn't interest him. He tells me that this is his way of showing people that what they say is important and that they are valuable individuals.

7. **Listen For The Message Within The Message** - Another one of my dad's skills is to listen for the message within the message. By listening intently, he is able to grasp the topic and move more effectively into the conversation. He says that most people are looking for encouragement, answers or insights to the subjects they discuss. By listening in this manner, he is able to connect more effectively.

8. **Don't Change The Subject** - When you are engaged in a conversation, don't change the subject unless the discussion is finished. I observe people who do this all the time in

small group settings, business meetings and social encounters. If you change the subject of a discussion prematurely, you demonstrate a lack of interest in the discussion and indicate that what you have to say is more important.

9. Respond By Asking Questions - When you ask people questions during a conversation, you show a sincere interest in the topic. My dad says that most people operate at “the feeling level”, rather than “the thinking level”, even if they are good thinkers. I agree! My Dad’s favorite question is to ask how they FEEL about the subject they have raised.

10. Don’t Start a Side Conversation - When part of a group conversation, never start a side conversation, even if the person talking is not making eye contact with you. Yes, they should be including you in the conversation by sharing eye contact equally with each person in the group, but don’t allow their mistake to prevent you from being a good listener.

Like many of the other thoughts I have shared with you, instinctively I know the right thing to do. But doing it consistently is the hard part. Being a good listener requires an intentional effort and above all, a sincere interest in other people. It is a skill worthy of mastering.

I am committed to working on being a better listener. Will you commit to showing you care about people by incorporating these ten tips into your daily routine? On a scale of 1-10, what’s your commitment?

**“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”
Dale Carnegie**

About the Author: Todd Smith is a successful entrepreneur of 30 years and founder of Little Things Matter.