

Best Practices to Improve Listening Skills

1. Starting to say something at the same time as someone else is a bit like those moments when you and someone else go for the handle of a door, or step towards the elevator or escalator...or go for the last cookie. We tend to say, "Go ahead"; "No, you go," etc. *Assuming* you have the right of way doesn't work unless you truly have it.
2. Look directly at the person, even turning your body towards them. Fully engage.
3. Listening is actively participating. Without active participation, engagement of the mind, one is only hearing. Analogy: Catching in baseball or football is as important as throwing. The action is not completed until the ball is caught. If we do not penetrate to the mind that utters the words the result is a "failure to communicate" (*Cool Hand Luke*).
4. Be careful not to jump in to finish someone's sentence unless they look like they really want some help.
5. Listen more / talk less, especially when conversations grow tense. Be patient.
6. Pause. It builds trust. The conversation is an opportunity to listen and reflect, not a problem solving or planning session.
7. Turn your back on distractions, literally. If you were distracted and missed something someone said, turn to the person and ask them kindly to repeat it.
8. When you don't understand something, the burden is on you.
9. Decide together how to use phones.