Listening for Meaning and Understanding

## *Listening Style Profile*

While we all engage different listening styles in various settings, by answering the following questions "Yes" or "No" you will be able to identify the style of listening that you use most often.

You can use the descriptions found at the end of this exercise to explore your answers. Please keep in mind that one style of listening is not better or worse than another.

1. When listening to others, I frequently try to put myself in their "shoes." _____

2. At times, I become impatient when listening to others. _____

3. Generally, I would prefer to hear just the facts. _____

4. I frequently find myself taking "mental trips" or day-dreaming when listening to others. _____

5. I frequently take the time to listen to others, even when I really can't spend the time. _____

6. I become frustrated when others don't present their ideas in an orderly way. _____

7. I prefer to listen to small talk at a party rather than serious discussions about world affairs. _____

8. When hurried, I let the other person(s) know that I only have a limited amount of time to talk and listen. _____

9. I frequently find myself faking attention when listening to others. _____

10. I become impatient with people who tell jokes and stories during meetings and find it difficult to listen to them. _____

11. I prefer *reading* technical information rather than *listening* to technical information.

12. I tend to discredit information coming from people who are not “experts.”

13. I often focus my listening attention on the person rather than on the topic being discussed.

14. When listening to others, I frequently find myself evaluating the person and/or their message.

15. I find it difficult to listen to a discussion that does not have a well-defined purpose.

16. I sometimes find that my style of listening makes others feel nervous or uncomfortable.

17. Generally, I don’t evaluate/criticize what a person has to say until after they have finished talking.

18. I find myself expecting others to give their full attention to me when listening.

19. I am perceptive about the emotional states of others when listening to them.

20. I am easily frustrated by people who are “long-winded.”

Use the descriptions found below to explore your answers from the preceding pages. Determine how many "Yes" responses you used in each of the four listening style categories—a "Yes" response for a statement indicates that you use that particular style of listening.

Chances are high that you answered "Yes" to statements in more than one category. However, your overall response pattern should indicate one style of listening you use most often.

| Question Numbers | Number of "Yes" Responses | Type of Listening |
|---|---|---|
| 2, 3, 12, 14, 16 | | Critical |
| 4, 7, 9, 11, 17 | | Social |
| 1, 5, 13, 18, 19 | | Empathic |
| 6, 8, 10, 15, 20 | | Administrative |

*Questions to consider:*

What are some of the positive aspects of the listening style you use most frequently?

What are some of the areas you might develop in your listening?

How does your listening style influence and/or affect your workplace interactions?

*Listener Style Characteristics*

| Listening Style | Characteristics | Effective Applications |
|---|---|---|
| Critical | • Impatient at times<br>• Listens for technical information<br>• Tends to listen only to "experts"<br>• Focuses on the task rather than the person<br>• Tests/scrutinizes everything<br>• Avoids mistakes<br>• Cautious | ▫ Decision-making business meetings<br>▫ Jury duty<br>▫ Evaluating information<br>▫ Debates |
| Social | • Non-judgmental; Uncritical<br>• Receptive to various types of information if not technical<br>• Listens for pleasure or interest<br>• Takes a lot of other people's time<br>• Often present in body, although not always in the mind<br>• Appears to be an interested listener, often fakes attention<br>• Tunes in and out of meetings | ▫ Social gatherings (e.g., cocktail parties, luncheons, etc.)<br>▫ Entertainment (e.g., concerts, movies) |
| Empathetic | • Gives time willingly<br>• Requires time from others<br>• Perceives the emotional state of others<br>• Often gets emotionally involved<br>• Handles close relationships well<br>• Focuses on the person, rather than the task<br>• Nonjudgmental, yet not always rational<br>• Gets off target easily (distractible)<br>• Sees both sides of issues | ▫ Counseling sessions<br>▫ When others need a sympathetic ear<br>▫ Trying to understand another person's point of view |
| Administrative | • Listens to various kinds of information<br>• Wants to know the purpose of a meeting from the start<br>• Gives direct feedback about how much time she/he has available to talk<br>• Willingly gives energy and effort if speaker is well-organized | ▫ Meetings/business sessions<br>▫ Establishing business relationships<br>▫ When time is at a premium |