

## Listening Skills

**Intentional curiosity:** It can't go without saying that to really listen to someone else takes an act of volition. We are not simply hearing words but seeking to be interested and curious about another human being. Looking for non-verbal cues, emotion, and words will make you a better listener. Become more aware of being tuned-out or distracted while listening, such as multitasking. Studies show if your attention is divided retention of information and social cues crucial for listening plummet. Good body language (eye contact, head nods, facial and bodily expressions, etc.) skills are borne from an honest intention to listen as well.

**Paraphrasing:** This skill is our ability to put in our own words what someone else is saying or may be feeling. The one I use heavily in coaching is "So it sounds like..." which allows me to make sure I am in sync with what is being expressed. Truly, the intention behind paraphrasing is to make sure you are on the same page with others. Typically we have a fear of being wrong so we don't check in with others. Paraphrasing is great in that you don't have to be right! That's the point! It allows you to clear up any misunderstandings or assumptions you may have. In short, then you paraphrase you get to capture the essence of someone else's experience periodically.

**Questions:** Our ability to ask curious questions (open and closed) is paramount to successful relationships. If we are too hyper-focused on our own experience then we are not building a relationship. It takes intention and awareness to go deeper with a person or group. When you are truly curious questions naturally appear. It also helps you exclusively focus on someone else and not put the locus of attention back on you. Ordinarily someone will tell you something, which then reminds you of something from your own experience. Then normally you would start talking about yourself and 'drop' the other person. We need to resist this temptation when truly listening. It's not that we can't share our viewpoint, rather we make sure we don't hijack the conversation leaving the other feeling dropped. Use questions that begin with how, what and why liberally.