

# Next Level Listening

Listening is vital to well-being, collaborating, and leading. We know this and yet, at times, fall short as of listening.

When we move too fast, even with good intentions and a desire to serve, we often fail to hear those around us, including ourselves.

Living “well” is rooted in listening inward to ourselves and those around us. Listening well is rooted in others feeling safe, valued, and heard. Often, this is more important than we appreciate and failing to be valued and heard is at the root of disagreements.

## Great Listeners Understand The Layers



### Key Layers of Listening:

We live in a “head-dominant” culture. We often hear and overvalue thoughts from our heads or minds or information deemed logical, expertise, etc. (safer, more familiar, and less volatile).

As a result, we overlook, undervalue, and fail to hear the softer but perhaps wiser sides.

Balance listening from your head, heart, and body. Try to listen to others with those same three filters.



#### Level 1: Surface Level Listening

- Understanding the literal message conveyed.
- What is being said, what is being heard, what is below the surface?



#### Level 2: Emotional Listening

- Recognizing and understanding the emotions underlying the message.
- Listen for what is said, what is the emotion, what is happening below.



#### Level 3: Subtextual Listening

- Inferring the unsaid or implied meanings and intentions.

Invest in listening: Remember that we have two ears, eyes, nostrils, lungs (and four heart ventricles) – but only one mouth!



# Foundational Listening

Listening is a deeply receptive process (back foot), whereas many work environments are action-oriented and focused forward (front foot).



**Prepare:** Open yourself, your mindset, and your environment.



**Foster Trust:** Establish a connection and a safe container to deepen the conversation.



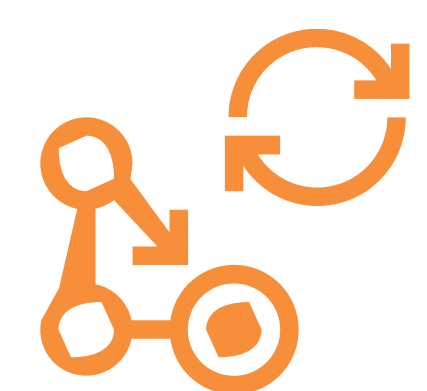
**Listen Reflectively:** Paraphrase to demonstrate listening, to confirm understanding, and encourage elaboration.



**Pause:** Embrace silence. Allow others to collect their thoughts and further elaborate.



**Probe** Ask for additional meaning.



**Adjust** Assess understanding and adapt your altitude to get additional perspective.

## Tips To Listen Better



Understand your listening needs (ie, what is the best time of day, etc).



Support yourself to listen better (ie, take notes, schedule breaks)



Create clear expectations (I have this amount of time.)



Listen to your full self (ie, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually)



# Next Level: Listening Inward

If you feel like a good listener and yet experience people not hearing you, you might question whether you listen to yourself.

- Do you hear your thoughts (what you believe, not the shoulds, ought to)?
- Can you feel all your emotions (not just the good or happy ones)?
- Are you able to access your intuition or wisdom?

If you want to be a better “Level 3” listener, Start by listening inward.

- Create white space, find stillness, and do this with consistency.
- Create rituals that can help: a time of day, type of music, special setting, lighting a candle, or being out in nature.
- Notice and resist the desire to catch up on the news, squeeze in another conversation, read another email, etc. Get below the words, the to-do list, the shoulds.
- Explore what is below the surface. Foster a relationship with your inner muse. With patience, consistency, and gentleness, the muse will share more.
- Uncover what impairs your listening: assumptions, expectations, judgments, biases, etc.
- Listen inward to hear your own wisdom, explore your true desire, and find your own voice

## Barriers to Listening:

- Lack of Bandwidth (poor time management, burnout, lack of focus)
- Distractions
- Disrespect (judgments, assumptions, etc.)
- Lack of Self-awareness
  - Emotions (whether conscious or not, we all have triggers)
  - Prejudice and Bias
  - Assumptions





## AWARENESS

- Notice when you listen deeply and what supports that.
- Notice where you shut down, tune out, and react.
- Notice good listeners who you admire/dislike? Why? What do they do or not do? Where do you feel most heard?
- Where do you need to focus and invest to be a better listener to others?
- Where do you need to focus and invest to be a better listener to yourself?

## ACTIVATION

- Invest time daily in listening better
- Set Intentions for how you want to listen
- Create space to listen inward
- Assess (what worked well, what could have worked better, what did you learn?)

## AGILITY BUILDING

- Bring listening awareness to all aspects for life.
- Track your engagement and energy levels based on better listening.
- What shifts when you are more present? When do you listen more deeply?

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Articulate your listening goals to others.
- Engage others for feedback: Where do they feel heard, supported, and engaged?

## INTEGRATION/ACCELERATION

- Apply deeper connections, relationships, and energy into listening more
- Deepen your awareness of what it means to be “listened to”?
- Align life to spend more time in the right relationship.

REMEMBER: Most of us listen to respond. Investing time to listen is a way to “go slow, to be able to go fast.” The more you can practice level three listening, the greater access you have to deep, fulfilling, and inspired relationships. To learn more, please visit [www.AIMLeadership.com](http://www.AIMLeadership.com) (c) 2024 AIM Leadership, LLC