

Are you Hard of Listening?

Category: Communications

We all have the phrase 'hard of hearing'. We don't really use it to call people 'hard of listening' or 'hard of hearing' but we do use it to call people 'hard of listening' or 'hard of hearing'.

Just because somebody is quiet doesn't mean that they are listening and just because someone is extroverted doesn't mean that they aren't. You never know what is actually going on in anyone else's head and they may have switched off and be thinking about something completely different.

It is important to listen effectively because people respond better if they think you are listening and taking you seriously. We have all met the kind of people who just seem to be waiting for an opening so they can jump in and say what they want to say, and it can be a very demeaning behavior.

There are some active listening tools you can use. These tools will stop your attention from wandering and also demonstrate to the other person that you are paying attention. Without interrupting or trying to steal the stage, the major active listening traits are as follows:

- Use body language that expresses interest – nods, smiles, brief comments
- Ask brief questions to indicate that you are paying attention
- Ask clarifying questions
- Wait five seconds before jumping in with what you want to say

You have to make sure your questions and comments enhance rather than interrupt the flow. The trick is never to let what the other person is saying become a monologue and to show them that you are interested and connected and not just waiting for your turn with the 'talking stick'.

If you can master these simple techniques then two positive things will happen. First your communication with the other person will improve and become more effective. Second, you will actually pay better attention, and your levels of empathy will increase, making you a better communicator all round.