Empathic Listening
The Key to Communication

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1. Refer participants to page 3 in the guidebook.

2. Ask:

What gets in the way of listening effectively?

Lack of time, our own agenda, distractions, the sense that we’re right and others are wrong.

3. State:

One of the biggest obstacles to real communication is our tendency to use our own experience and opinions as models for others to follow. This is called “responding autobiographically.” The key to effective communication is learning to listen empathically instead of responding from our own autobiographies.

Autobiographical Responses

One of the biggest obstacles in interpersonal communication is our tendency to respond autobiographically, meaning from our own frame of reference. We advise, probe, interpret, and evaluate others’ messages based on our own experiences and motives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVISING</th>
<th>Giving counsel, advice, and solutions to problems.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROBING</td>
<td>Asking questions from our own frame of reference or agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETING</td>
<td>Explaining another’s motives and behavior based on our own experience; trying to figure people out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATING</td>
<td>Judging, and either agreeing or disagreeing.</td>
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One friend, one person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider our problem, can change our whole outlook on the world.

—Dr. Elton Mayo
5. **Review the autobiographical responses and give quick examples of each by stating:**

Suppose a friend said, “I just got fired.”

We respond autobiographically— from our own frame of reference— when we:

- Advise: “Well, you better update your resume.”
- Interpret: “You didn’t really like that job anyway.”
- Evaluate: “That’s terrible. They shouldn’t have done that.”

One of the keys to Empathic Listening is to give other people psychological air— or space— so they can explore their point of view and their feelings. Responding with autobiographical responses provides no air. It prescribes the “cure” without diagnosing the problem first.

6. **Display Slide 6, “Video: Diagnose Before You Prescribe.”**

7. Refer participants to page 4 in the guidebook.

8. **Set up the video by stating:**

In this video, Stephen R. Covey illustrates what we’ve just been talking about. As you watch, respond to the questions on page 4 in the guidebook.

9. Show the video.

20. **Review the three steps to Empathic Listening:**

   1. Reflect what the speaker feels.
   2. Reflect what the speaker says.
   3. Reflect what the speaker feels and says in your own words.
      
      For example: You feel _______ about ____________.

21. **State:**

    The first two steps may feel awkward — maybe even oversimplified. But learning to listen this way is like learning to play the piano. You don’t immediately start playing concertos. First you learn the scales and then you practice them over and over.

    Remember to reflect back in statements, not questions. Be aware of the inflection of your voice.

22. **Refer participants again to page 7 in the guidebook and review the “Helpful Language” and “Tips” boxes.**

23. **State:**

    Don’t ever underestimate the profound impact Empathic Listening can have on you and others. It is the single most important communication skill you can ever learn. Initially, Empathic Listening may feel awkward and counterintuitive because we are so conditioned to first want to be understood. But be patient and you’ll soon get the hang of it. Remember, all of us have been trained in how to speak, how to read, and how to think. But very few of us have ever been trained in how to listen.
The Elements of Empathic Listening

Empathic Listening is reflecting what a person feels and says in your own words.

You feel ______ about ______.

Angry, frustrated, excited, sad, irritated, ignored, misunderstood, happy, nervous, hesitant, embarrassed, foolish, upset, discouraged, stifled, disrespected, emotional, confused, speechless, unsure, enthusiastic

Content, topic, or meaning of what is being said

HELPFUL LANGUAGE

As I get it, you feel...
So as you see it...
You seem...
You must have felt...

You sound...
What I’m hearing is...
I’m not sure I’m with you, but...
Your feeling now is...

TIPS:
1. Focus on the speaker, not on your “correct” response to the speaker.
2. If you get stuck, just repeat what the speaker says. If you are sincerely trying to understand, you won’t be perceived as being manipulative.
3. Don’t be afraid of silence. Sometimes just listening and saying nothing is the best way to get to the heart of an issue.
Video Worksheet: Nobody’s Listening

Watch the video and answer the following questions:

1. What were the short-term benefits of Empathic Listening?

2. What might have been some long-term benefits of Empathic Listening?

3. How did Empathic Listening eliminate barriers in the workplace?

4. How were relationships improved?

Other key insights:
Video Worksheet: *I Know Just What You Mean*

List the communication problems you observe in each of the scenarios listed below:

**Conversation Scenarios:**

1. Waitress (Mae), boss (Otto), and waiter.

2. Senior executive with junior executive.

3. Young woman with her daughter and parents.

4. Account manager with two account representatives.
Materials Included With *Empathic Listening*

The *chaptered DVD* is a workshop compilation of three separate video segments originally produced for use within the *FranklinCovey* leadership training curriculum. The set is based on the premise that most people don’t take the necessary time and effort to properly diagnose a problem before prescribing solutions. They immediately assume they understand someone else’s condition. Stephen R. Covey says, “Communication is simply mutual understanding”. This workshop contains everything you need to effectively teach the principle and practice of Empathic Listening to your team.

- **Nobody’s Listening** – (11 minutes) Depicts what happens when a manager fails to listen to the concerns of a subordinate. With a second chance to practice the art of active listening, a number of problems are averted.

- **Diagnose Before You Prescribe** – (8 minutes) Stephen R. Covey, giving a workshop, provides insights on this key step in the empathic listening process.

- **I Know Just What You Mean** – (21 minutes) Shows the difference between listening with the intent to respond and listening with the intent to understand. It also demonstrates techniques that minimize misunderstanding and miscommunication.

- **A Tonesetter** video (10 minutes) is included that contains inspirational quotes and music with a countdown clock to play before the workshop and during breaks.

- The **Facilitator Guide** included as a PDF on the disc, provides full instructions for facilitating the workshop with numbered steps that indicate what to do or say at a given point in the presentation. Help is provided on where to keep the emphasis on the concept of empathic listening.

- A customizable **PowerPoint Presentation**® provides visual graphics and bullet points to emphasize the training and development of empathic listening presented in the workshop.

- A reproducible **Participant Guidebook**, also included as a PDF on the disc, gives participants a take-away guide to understanding and practicing empathic listening. Visual aides, written exercises and action plans are included for them to continue with their development of a new skill.
Program Information and Pricing

Purchase Price: $795.00
Rental Price: $395.00
Preview Price: Free
Running Time: approximately a 2 hour workshop

Materials included with purchase: chaptered DVD with Facilitator's Guide PDF, customizable PowerPoint Presentation, reproducible Participant Guidebook PDF on the DV-Rom

(contents & pricing subject to change without notice)