



# Are You a Good Listener?

Many people see themselves as a good drivers and listeners. But, is it true?



According to research in a recent Harvard Business Review article, a good listener is more than someone who passively listens and repeats back what they heard to confirm understanding. A good listener asks great questions that challenge assumptions and builds on the other person's self-esteem so that they feel supported. He or she engages in a cooperative conversation and may disagree or make suggestions to open up other alternatives without making the other person feel threatened or unsafe. So, what is your Listening Level as a Leader? How do you measure up?



## #1. Creating a safe environment

Good listeners create a safe environment to discuss difficult, complex and/or emotional issues that may be bothering a friend, co-worker, partner, colleague or team member. They create the relationships and conditions where these issues can be discussed in a way that people feel safe. **In other words, they are courageous and do not avoid having the difficult conversations. They are also committed to creating safe spaces for important conversations.**



## #2. Getting rid of distraction and focusing

Good listeners are good at getting rid of distractions. They put their phones and computers away when they are engaging in an critical conversation or dealing with an issue. They give the speaker their undivided attention. They make sure that they are using appropriate eye-contact and body language that demonstrate that they are open to listening without becoming defensive and threatened. **In other words, they stay present in the moment. They own their role in keeping the conversation focused.**



## #3. Understanding the key messages

Good listeners seek to understand the substance of the message that the other person is sharing to deeply understand the topic or issue that are being discussed. They try to capture ideas, ask questions and restate the issues to confirm their understanding of the issue before jumping to conclusions and offering suggestions. **In other words, they are careful not to make assumptions or overlay their own perspective on an issue until they have tried to understand the other person's point of view.**



## #4. Observing non-verbals behind messages

Good listeners are very observant. They look for clues in non-verbals because they realize that 80% of the message is conveyed in what isn't said but what is shared via facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, rate of breathing, posture and gestures. They look for the message behind the message to better understand the other person. **In other words, they use their power of observation to better understand the person and the context of the issue.**



## #5. Connecting with feelings about the topic

Good listeners work hard to connect to the other person's feelings about an issue around a topic. They listen to understand the emotions that are impacting the interpretations behind a person's perspective about the topic at hand. As they engage with the listener, they identify the real issues, acknowledge the challenges that are being faced and validate the speaker in a supportive way. **In other words, they empathize with the other person and try to understand and feel some of the same feelings that the person is emoting to better understand the person and the issue.**



## #6. Asking questions that clarify assumptions

Good listeners ask questions that clarify assumptions that the other person holds and helps them see the issue in an new light. They may add thoughts and ideas about the topic that could be useful to the other person. They are careful not to hijack the conversation and keep the conversation balanced with constructive feedback and a supportive tone. **In other words, they listen for underlying paradigms and try to ask questions that make the unspoken beliefs and values visible to be examined and discussed in a way that the other person feels valued.**

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