

## Active Listening Skills

Coaching begins with listening -- deep listening. The quality of our listening has a direct bearing on the quality of our coaching. We can't draw out the best in another person, or tap into their greatness, if we haven't listened for it. Listening is one of the greatest gifts that you can offer another person. Listening, in and of itself, provides tremendous benefits. **Listening involves . . .**

- Being curious about the other person.
- Quieting your own "mind chatter" so that you can be fully present with another person.
- Creating a safe space for someone to explore.
- Conveying value. You are important to me!
- Not being about giving answers, but exploring possibilities.
- Reflecting back, like a mirror, what you experienced from the person.
- Really "getting" another person.

### Hearing VS listening

- Hearing is an auditory process. Listening is an intentional process.
- Hearing is done with the ears. Listening involves all of the senses and the total being.
- Hearing includes words, details, and information. Listening adds deeper layers.
- Hearing is to know about someone that goes beyond basic observations.
- Listening is a skill to be developed.

Coaches listen so closely that the answers almost come out on their own. ***The ideal listening ratio is to listen 80% of the time and to respond 20% of the time.*** A coach needs to:

- Listen to what the other person is saying, as well as what they are not saying.
- Listen from deep within (gut-level listening).
- Listen to "Get" the other person.
- Listen without judgment, criticism, or agenda. You are creating a safe space for the person to share.
- Listen without thinking about what you will be saying next.
- Listen for values, frustrations, motivation, and needs.
- Listen for the greatness in the person you are coaching.
- Listen for limiting beliefs and false assumptions.
- Listen for shoulds, oughts, and musts. They indicate obligation and guilt rather than what a client really wants.
- Listen for the obvious. What is the other person not seeing? What are they unaware of?
- Listen for the tone, pace, volume, inflection, and frequently-used words. Note when these items change.
- Listen for the larger context.
- Listen attentively to the end of the statements. The best words often flow out last!
- Listen to your reactions as you listen.

To be able to listen at multiple levels, a coach must quiet their mind of any mind chatter or internal conversations. They must create a physical environment that promotes deep listening, by attending to the space and pace of life and by managing their scheduling and calendar. Coaches grow to be comfortable with silence -- resisting the urge to fill the space. Great listeners hear with their:

- **Ears.** They listen to the spoken words, as well as tone, pace, pitch, and inflection. They listen for the essence of what is being said.
- **Eyes.** Most of our communication is non-verbal. Great listeners notice the body language of the one speaking.
- **Full body and being.** Gifted listeners notice how they are receiving the message. They pay attention to what is happening inside any of them as they listen.



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