

Conversations for Caring: 10 Caring Points

Topic: *Saying It Best When You Say Nothing at All: The Power of Listening/Presence*
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1. “Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak.”
(*Epictetus 55A.D. – 135A.D.*)
2. Some realities that challenge common myths about communication:
 - a. *We communicate even when we are not consciously aware of it.*
 - b. *80% of communication is non-verbal - body language, eye contact, gestures, voice tone.*
 - c. *Communication is not a one-way activity, but a two-way activity.*
 - d. *People can feel overwhelmed when they receive too much information.*
3. Words alone don’t have meaning in themselves – we give them meaning. And sometimes we can misinterpret the words of others when we believe that we all share the same meanings.
4. The Chinese sign for the verb “to listen” contains the signs for “ear,” “you,” “eyes,” “undivided attention,” and “heart.” (*See reverse side.*)
5. There are different levels of hearing and listening, and if we want to listen more deeply, we need to bring energy and involvement to the process. This can make the difference between just hearing and really understanding others, retaining the information they share, reflecting on what they share, and empathizing with them – helping them. Effective listening is a learned behavior.
6. There are also three different types of listening: 1). Competitive/Combative listening is always ready for rebuttal and counterargument - focusing on the holes and gaps in the other person’s message; 2). Passive/Attentive Listening is genuinely interested in what someone is saying, but it assumes that it knows and understands their message without checking in with them; and 3). Active/Reflective listening is genuinely interested in what the other person is thinking, feeling, and wanting. But it also restates or paraphrases its understanding of the other person’s message to verify that understanding before responding.
7. Some barriers to listening to others: *Being preoccupied; Focusing on what we are going to say in response – or our rebuttal; Listening to our own personal beliefs and thoughts about what is being said; Making judgments about the other person’s message; Not asking for clarification when we don’t understand.*
8. Some listening tips: *Let the other person talk; Practice silence; Clarify misunderstandings; Avoid changing the subject; Take your time in giving advice; Encourage reminiscing.*
9. Presence is the gift we give to someone when we listen deeply. It is not about fixing what is wrong but about **being with** someone in the moment – empathically, silently, intuitively, and mindfully. Being present invites us to embrace our vulnerability and powerlessness. Presence affirms and honors the experience of the person to whom we offer it.
10. Some ways to develop presence: *Move out of your head into your body; Breathe; Be real or authentic with yourself and others; Let go of perfectionism; Receive others and open yourself to them; Practice being in the moment – in the here, in the now.*

*These 10 Caring Points are intended to be a summary of best practices.
For citations, references, and additional information,
please contact Dan Collier at 781-586-8620 or dcollier@glss.net*

EAR



EYES

UNDIVIDED
ATTENTION

HEART

References & Resources

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