

Improving Your Listening Skills

INTENDED AUDIENCE:	Individuals seeking to be more effective when communicating with others.
PROGRAM LENGTH:	4 – 5 hours
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:	<p>Have you ever noticed how good it feels when someone really listens to you? When we're listened to, our feelings and needs are taken into account, we're more relaxed and open, and we feel we can achieve our objectives. The goal of this program is to help participants get these kinds of results when communicating with others.</p> <p>Participants will be introduced to the Personal Listening Learning Model, after which it will inform each step of the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First, participants will explore the role that listening plays in communication. ▪ Then, they will use the model to discover the five approaches to listening. ▪ Next, participants will examine their own Listening Approaches, including their strengths and challenges when listening. ▪ Then, they'll practice recognizing and using effective approaches for different listening situations. ▪ Finally, participants will create action plans to help them apply the new listening skills.
PROGRAM DETAILS: Length: 5 - 10 minutes Activity: Large Group Materials: None	<p>WELCOME TO IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS</p> <p>Goal: Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discover the goals and plan of the session. <p>Activity Description: Participants are introduced to the trainer and learn the goals and plan of the session.</p>
Length: 10 - 15 minutes Activity: Partner & Large Group Materials: Flipchart paper, markers	<p>LISTENING ICEBREAKER</p> <p>Goal: Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discover common frustrations that people have about listening. <p>Activity Description: Participants choose partners and talk to one another about common frustrations they face when listening. They then introduce their partners to the large group and share that person's views on listening.</p>

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Length: 15 - 20 minutes
Activity: Partner
Materials: Listening Situation Cards

INTRODUCTION TO THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

Goal:

Participants will:

- Discover how good listening skills are essential to effective communication.

Activity Description:

Participants pair up in a listening activity where they experience both good and poor listening skills. Participants then discuss how they felt and behaved during the activity. They reflect on times when another's listening behaviors affected them positively and negatively, after which they share these experiences with their partners.

Length: 30 - 35 minutes
Audio: 2 minutes
Activity: Large Group
Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, sheets of colored paper

UNDERSTANDING WHAT INFLUENCES OUR ABILITY TO LISTEN

Goals:

Participants will:

- Discover the different filters people use when listening.
- Discover other factors that have an impact on effective listening.

Activity Description:

Participants listen to audio clips of a busy café and discuss what they remember, learning that selective attention is a filter that affects how they listen. Participants then follow the facilitator's instructions in an activity involving folding sheets of paper. From this, they discover how selective interpretation can influence listening. Next, participants listen to a paragraph of information being read to them to discover how selective retention also works as a filter when listening. Finally, they discuss the importance of non-verbal communication when attempting to be an effective listener.

Length: 25 - 30 minutes
Video: 10 minutes
Activity: Large Group
Materials: None

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE LISTENING APPROACHES

Goals:

Participants will:

- Discover the five different Listening Approaches used in communication.
- Recognize that each Listening Approach is defined by focus on either feelings or information, as well as a desire to receive, understand, or judge.
- Consider their past experiences with each approach.

Activity Description:

Participants view video segments, each describing of one of the five Listening Approaches. After each segment, they discuss the focus, mode and characteristics of that approach and reflect on situations where they may have used that approach or seen it used.

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Length: 5 - 10 minutes
Activity: Individual
Materials: None

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NATURAL LISTENING APPROACH

Goal:

- Participants will:
- Discover their most natural Listening Approaches.

Activity Description:

Participants discover how they scored in each of the five Listening Approaches based on their responses to the program prework, and then read and personalize the individualized feedback about their preferred Listening Approaches.

Length: 25 - 30 minutes
Activity: Individual, Large & Small Groups
Materials: Flipchart paper, markers

EXPLORING YOUR STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES AS A LISTENER

Goals:

- Participants will:
- Explore how their listening strengths contribute to their success in communication.
 - Explore how the listening skills that challenge them impede their success in communication.

Activity Description:

Participants read and personalize their individualized feedback about their listening strengths. They gather into groups according to their most natural Listening Approach and list these strengths. Participants then read and personalize their individualized feedback about the listening skills that challenge them. They form new groups based on their least natural Listening Approach and list their challenges. They report to the large group how their strengths make them better communicators, then share how their challenges hold them back as communicators and what they could do to improve.

Length: 40 - 45 minutes
Audio: 1 minute
Activity: Individual, Large & Small Groups
Materials: Flipchart paper, markers

RECOGNIZING WHICH SITUATIONS REQUIRE DIFFERENT LISTENING APPROACHES

Goals:

- Participants will:
- Discover that effective communication requires the ability to adjust their Listening Approaches.
 - Recognize which Listening Approaches are appropriate when communicating in a variety of situations.
 - Explore what happens when an inappropriate Listening Approach is used.

Activity Description:

Participants gather into groups according to their most natural Listening Approach. They share past experiences when that approach served them well and when it did not. They then determine a better approach for the latter. Participants review the four primary motivations when listening and determine which Listening Approach aligns with each. They work in their groups again to list situations that call for their approach, and then they present their lists to the large group. Participants review the four motivations when speaking, and listen to audio segments modeling each motivation. They identify the motivation, and determine which Listening Approach would be most appropriate with each speaker.

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Length: 15 - 20 minutes
Activity: Individual & Partner
Materials: None

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION GAPS

Goals:

Participants will:

- Discover how their preferred approach to listening can lead to gaps in communication with certain speakers.
- Recognize which speaker motivations give them the most difficulty.
- Explore ways to minimize miscommunication.

Activity Description:

Participants read and personalize their individualized feedback to learn how they listen with different types of speakers. They reflect on the speaker motivation that challenges them the most, then consider how their approach may affect the speaker and what they can do to improve in this area. They then work with partners to share their challenges and determine Listening Approaches that would be more appropriate for their situations.

Length: 45 - 50 minutes
Video: 5 minutes
Activity: Individual & Large Group
Materials: Flipchart paper, markers

RECOGNIZING THE BEHAVIORS THAT COMMUNICATE EACH LISTENING APPROACH

Goals:

Participants will:

- Recognize the specific behaviors associated with the five Listening Approaches.
- Explore their skill and comfort level with these behaviors.

Activity Description:

Participants watch video segments that model the behaviors of each of the five Listening Approaches. After viewing each segment, they identify behaviors they saw and list additional behaviors that would typify the approach. They reflect on the effect these behaviors might have on the speaker. Finally, they identify behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on their ability to use each approach.

Length: 15 - 20 minutes
Activity: Partner
Materials: None

PRACTICING LISTENING BEHAVIORS

Goals:

Participants will:

- Practice their skills in each Listening Approach.
- Identify techniques for improving their effectiveness with each Listening Approach.

Activity Description:

With a partner, participants role play two listening situations. In the first situation, one participant practices the skills of each Listening Approach while the other speaks. They then debrief which Listening Approaches were being used and provide feedback for improvement. They then switch roles and do the role play again using a different topic of discussion.

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Length: 15 - 20 minutes
Activity: Individual & Partner
Materials: None

ACTION PLAN: IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Goal:

Participants will:

- Create action plans that will help them develop the skills to become more effective listeners.

Activity Description:

Participants read and personalize their individualized feedback about areas of listening where they could improve. They then create action plans for improvement in two of the areas they identified. Participants then share their action plans with a partner, giving feedback to each other on their plans.

Length: 5 minutes
Activity: Large Group
Materials: None

CONCLUSION TO IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

Goal:

Participants will:

- Review the session goals and key concepts explored in the session.

Activity Description:

Participants review the key concepts of:

- Internal filters and external factors may influence how effectively we listen.
- Our tendencies determine our listening strengths and challenges.
- Adapting our natural listening styles to the needs of those speaking enables communication to be open and more productive.