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COMMUNICATION – Part III of IV: Receiving the Message (Listening)*

“If speaking is silver, then listening is gold.” – Turkish Proverb

Listening is the process that begins with giving the speaker your undivided attention. Poor listening occurs, in part, because we speak at an average rate of 120 words per minute, while we are able to listen at a rate of over 500 words per minute. Our ability to understand more than four times faster than the speaker can talk often leads to our minds wandering.

What can you do to listen more effectively?

1. Pay Attention/Stay Tuned In: Focus on what is being said. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back.
2. Avoid Distractions: Do not multi-task. Keep your eye on the speaker. Do not fiddle with pens, papers, type on your computer, etc. For important communication, put your phone on “Do not disturb”.
3. Do Not Interrupt: Listen to the entire message without interrupting. Many listening mistakes are made when people hear the first part of a sentence and finish it in their own minds without listening to the second part.
4. Watch nonverbal cues: Understand both the emotion and the content of the message. People sometimes say one thing and mean another. Make sure the message from their body language is the same as the verbal message.
5. Paraphrase: As a rule, we all need to do more paraphrasing! Begin by repeating back what you heard the speaker say. Start with: “It sounds like you...” or “So what you’re saying is...” When you paraphrase correctly, you convey that you have listened and understand the speaker. When you paraphrase incorrectly, it gives the speaker an opportunity to clarify, and for you to further your understanding.

Who will you be listening to more effectively this week?

* Some information was taken from the text: Leadership, by Lussier and Achua