

Effective Listening is More Important than Talking

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Listening as a Foundation of Success

The desire to do something great, to achieve, to be successful is a part of human nature. The yearning for success and the fear of failure run in his veins, and what it takes to be successful is nothing but “attitude.” Success always embraces those who have an attitude of listening as Bernard M. Baruch said, “Most of the successful people I’ve known are ones who do more listening than talking”. [Effective listening](#) is indeed more important than talking. It refers to being able to accurately receive, actively understand, and interpret the information provided by the speaker while displaying interest and providing the speaker with feedback.

Effective Communication and Social Relationships

Being social animals, the quality of human life depends largely on meaningful communication, and the key to effective communication is effective listening. Listening constitutes a great portion of interaction and communication; therefore, the importance of effective listening can never be over-emphasized. Without effective listening, things are easily misunderstood, and this can lead to serious problems. As Carl Rogers said, “Man’s inability to communicate is a result of his failure to listen effectively”. Effective listening allows one to discern a speaker’s perspective, recognize his/her concerns or needs, and to respond in the most productive way.

Listening as a Learning Skill

Effective listening is not only important for the development of good communication skills but also makes a person a good learner. No matter how intelligent a person is, he can efficiently attain knowledge only if he is a good listener. As Dalai Lama said, “When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know, but if you listen, you may learn something new” Every single person we come across in our lives has something to teach, and only through effective listening can we learn. Before the invention of writing, people used to receive virtually all their knowledge through listening. (Bodie, 2011) For a learner, effective listening is an essential attribute as it depicts the respect a student has for the teacher, thus contributing to the development of a healthy, respectful teacher-student relationship.

Leadership and Attentive Communication

Effective listening is one of the most important skills of a leader. As Bob Burg said, “Sometimes the most influential thing one can do is listen.” A good leader is always open, attentive, and flexible. Listening transmits respect and care; thus, masses develop a feeling of trust and respect for the leader. Through effective listening a leader gets to know about the problems of people; this creates a feeling of satisfaction in the hearts of people. Listening to the general public creates humility in the leader, thus protecting him from arrogance. Through effective listening, a leader develops the attitude of accepting criticism and making necessary changes. The leaders who don’t develop the attitude of effective listening end up being surrounded by people who are flatter than with their oily tongues, and failure becomes the fate of such leaders. Thus effective listening is an extremely essential attribute for a leader that leads him to the path of success and glory.

Listening Love and Human Relationships

The foundations of all the beautiful relationships in the world are laid on love, and “the first duty of love is to listen.” Paul Tillich. Listening is an attitude of heart, a genuine desire to be with another person, that both attracts and heals. Developing an attitude of listening makes us soft and tender and beautifies our relationships. A person who likes talking and making others understand what he wants to say without realizing the need to listen ends up being selfish, self-obsessed, and self-centered. Relationships flourish when they are nourished, and the nourishment they need is love, selflessness, care, affection, and above all, a listening ear. A poll revealed that communication problem is the most often cited contributing factor for divorce (65%). When considering divorce, 56% of women said their husband’s lack of listening was among the top communication complaints. This is clear evidence of how a lack of listening can prove to be detrimental to our relationships. It is listening that makes the bond between friends so pricelessly beautiful; as Karl Menninger said, “Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. (Brownell, 2012) The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward.”

Consequences of Talking Without Listening

Having a tendency to talk more and listen less can have serious impacts on a person’s life. It causes a person to be contented with his own knowledge. Thus, the person becomes unwilling to learn from others. Talking a lot causes a person to waste time and indulge in gossip and useless talk. Talking more and listening less makes the person intolerant, selfish, self-centered, and arrogant. It decreases the person’s ability to understand. It has negative impacts on the relationships of the person, be it with parents, siblings, teachers, friends, or colleagues. Excessive talking always puts a person in trouble; as a wise man said, “Much talking is the cause of danger. Silence is the means of avoiding misfortune. The talkative parrot is shut up in a cage. Other birds fly freely about”.

Conclusion on the Value of Listening

Therefore the greatness of man lies in the attitude of listening more and talking less. As Calvin Coolidge said, "It takes a great man to be a good listener." Effective listening brings honor and grace to a person. It is the attribute that makes him a good learner, a good leader, and an efficient worker. The beauty of all the relationships lies in the act of listening. Listening creates tolerance and makes a person a good citizen. Success is the fate of those who listen more and talk less.

References

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