**Effective Listening Tips**

Why develop effective listening skills? Listening to what someone has to say is the highest level of respect you can show anyone. Not only that, it just feels so great when someone takes time to listen to and show genuine interest in what you have to say that it is the basis of developing a relationship with that person.

Also by listening you have the opportunity to pick up valuable information that will help you establish what that other person’s needs are, what contacts they have, what useful experience and expertise they have etc etc

So, if you want to develop first class relationships with people have a look at these following tips to see how you can improve your own listening skills.

**•Stop talking!**

Yes the first step in listening to others is to stop talking yourself and give time for other people to talk. Maybe you are a natural talker and don’t like empty silences, but this isn’t an excuse for you to do all the talking.

**•Effective listening means don’t interrupt**

Whilst your enthusiasm for what the other person is saying might prompt you to dive in with your own thoughts, hold back until they have finished talking. Recognise too that people process information differently so some people talk faster than others therefore, allow time for people to think between sentences

**•Look for common ground**

To help you listen with genuine interest listen out for common ground – how are their experiences be similar to your own, how can their expertise be useful to someone you know, who do you know in common?

**•Listening for feelings and moods**

Words alone do not give the full picture about what someone is saying. Their tone of voice and body language give away far more about a person’s mood and feelings, so part and parcel of listening is also listening to the meaning behind someone’s words and observing their body language.

**•Show that you are listening**

Not only should you listen attentively, it is also important for you to show that you are listening:

◦show you are listening verbally by using listening noises - ‘uh…huh’…’ummmm…right’

◦use non-verbal signals such as nodding your head and maintaining eye contact with the speaker

◦reflect back what has been said…’so you primarily do business with blue chip organizations?’

◦build on what has been said and ask further related questions …’so you have an accountancy firm…where is that based?’

◦show empathy…’it sounds like you’ve had a difficult time then…’

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