



## **LISTEN AS WELL AS YOU SPEAK: Active Listening Skills (In-Person)**

**Half-day or one full day** depending on group size.

**The Objective** is to become a more conscious, active listener. This allows the participant to respond thoughtfully and thoroughly, thereby creating a more efficient, effective conversation and relationship.

**Coaching** is highly interactive and supportive. Participants will own and use the skills immediately through the combination of active coaching, layered skill development, and practice exercises.

### **Pre-Program Assignment**

Participants are asked to think about the three (3) people they interact with most at work. Consider how successful these people listen to them and vice versa. What do they like about those interactions? What would they change about those interactions?

## **PROGRAM OUTLINE**

### **Introduction & Initial Skills Assessment**

We begin by discussing what listening actually means, why it's such a critical skill to have and why it can be a challenge for many people. Each participant will answer a self-assessment questionnaire to reveal how they typically listen and respond in different scenarios.

### **Listening Obstacles**

- **Objective:** Coming out of the initial activity, we'll discuss the listening blocks participants might face. In order to change behavior, listeners have to level-set what gets in the way of doing that behavior successfully.
  - **Activity:** Review and discuss the pre-program activity.

### **Non-verbal Listening Cues**

- **Objective:** Participants learn how non-verbal cues can impact their ability to listen and clue them in to certain emotional responses. What can be done, non-verbally, to show a speaker they are listening, but more importantly how can those skills help them listen better?
  - **Activity:** Group discussion reviewing photos and non-verbal cues.

## When Views Differ

- **Objective:** Participants learn how to actively listen even when a speaker's views differ from their own or they disagree with the message. This allows them to uncover and appreciate different perspectives.
  - Exercise: Partner activity to practice using more thoughtful 'why' questions to learn more about someone's views.

## Listening without Interrupting

- **Objective:** Participants learn how forced silence is beneficial to hearing the whole story in order to understand the point. When a listener interrupts, they never really start listening as they just begin planning their rebuttal.
  - **Note-Taking:** We discuss why note-taking is not only an effective way to enhance listening, but also a respectful way to show the speaker we are keeping up with them.
  - Exercise: Group activity with encouraged note-taking to refine listening skills and replace the urge to interrupt.

## Difficult Listening

- **Objective:** Participants learn how to listen when it's hard to listen. At times, a speaker might be boring. Maybe they talk too long or go too deep into the details. Perhaps they haven't done a good job of keeping their audience front-of-mind. Participants will understand how to continue finding ways to listen that will in turn help them be a better communicator by avoiding these pitfalls as a future speaker.

## It's Your Turn

- **Objective:** When it's the listeners turn to speak, we'll discuss how to ask the right questions to seek more information and/or clarify what they've heard in order to keep the conversation going. In Sales, this is referred to as probing. This helps us uncover sticking points, uncertainties, and ensures we make correct assumptions and judgements.
  - Exercise: Partner activity that helps participants learn to ask specific questions and teaches them to listen attentively to the answer. This helps reduce misunderstandings and encourages more collaboration.

## Receiving Feedback

- **Objective:** Participants will understand how to internalize feedback so they can listen for what's most important and act on it without getting defensive. Many people take feedback as personal criticism, and a lot of it has to do with their listening frame of mind when receiving it. We discuss how to look for the underlying issue within the feedback, seek to clarify expectations, and work towards a clear next step toward improvement.
  - Activity: Feedback responses are reviewed for when a listener is receptive to the feedback they are getting, when they're feeling defensive to the feedback, and when the feedback is vague or confusing.

## Program Evaluation & Close