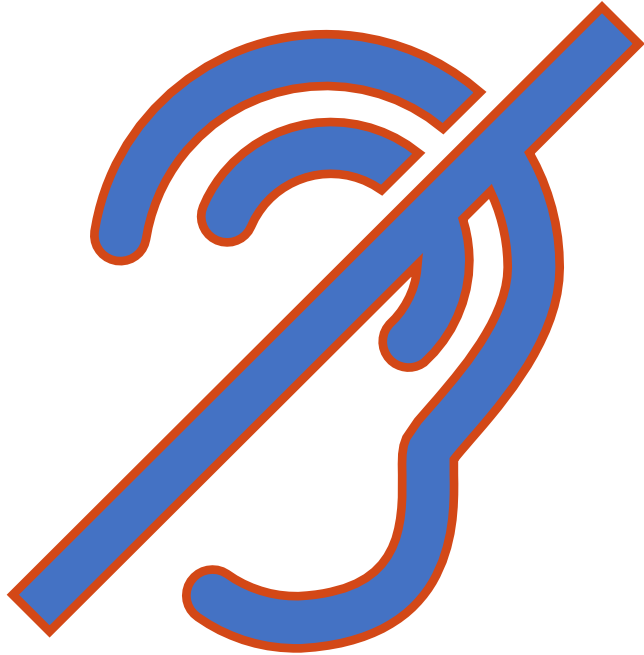


Listen Like You Mean It

XIMENA VENGOECHEA

Cultivating Listening Mindset

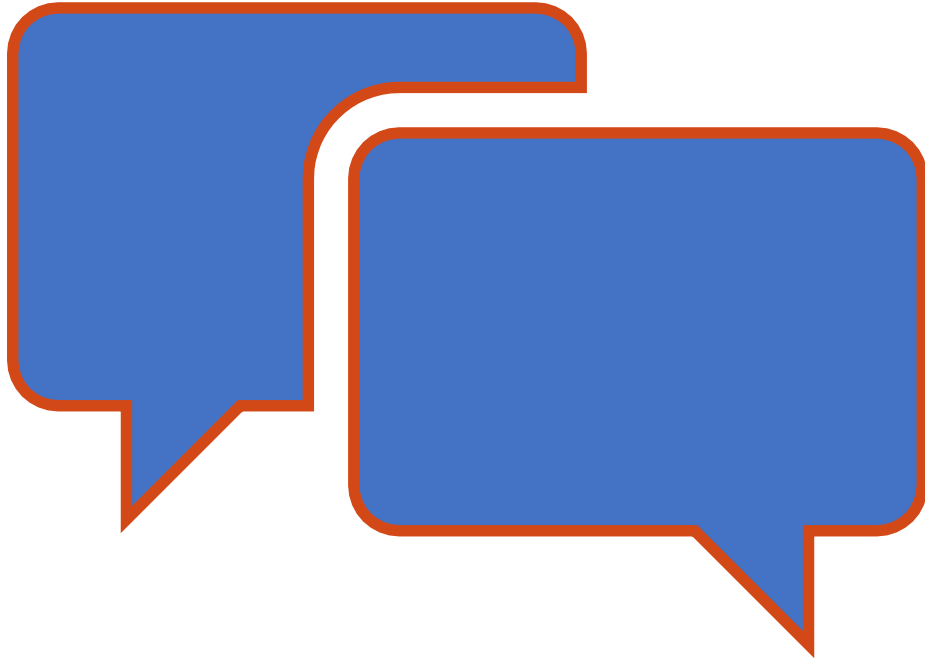


- * *Avoid surface listening (act of hearing the literal – but not emotional – content of a conversation, often at the expense of our conversation partner’s feelings)*
 - *Example 1 -seek to be useful, so offer advice and problem – even though conversation partner doesn’t want this;*
 - *Example 2 – wish to make others feel better, validate their experience – even though they don’t need any words of encouragement*

- * *Adopt/embrace Empathetic listening – taking in what another person is saying or not saying – with the intent to understand and relate to them on a human level)*
 - *Through empathetic listening – a space is created laying the foundation for open and honest communication between the speaker and the listener*

Cultivating Listening Mindset

- Empathy put yourself in others' shoes - stay in the experience of the conversation partner to ask relevant questions
 - Putting empathy into practice:
 1. Let others' perspective take the lead
 2. Remind yourself that it's not about you
 3. Tap into conversation partner emotions
- Humility –will pass no judgement on their opinion or perspective ; admit don't have answers and ready to be wrong
 - Putting humility to practice:
 1. Let go of pre-conceived notions
 2. Leave judgement at the door
 3. Assume you are in the presence of an expert
- Curiosity – being open to learn more about a topic/idea/person – even it doesn't pique interest
 - Putting curiosity to practice:
 1. Look for interesting Edges
 2. Ask: What else
 3. Discover the why



Stay Present

- ❖ able to take more information about our conversation partner – what they are saying or non-verbally suggesting
- ❖ There is no quicker way to end a conversation or relationship than to appear distracted
- ❖ Three skills to Stay Present
 1. Self-Awareness
 2. Trust
 3. Patience

1. Self-Awareness

1. Self-Awareness –

1. simple exercise of recognizing and labelling the emotion. This process helps to gain distance from the feeling/emotion and regulate the emotions in real time
2. Tune in to your body – pinning my arms against the chest; taking short or long breath's – identify what's happening in the body, we can better manage the response
3. Set yourself for success – certain conditions could throw us off our game and make it harder to stay present and have productive, empathetic conversations. The stimuli that bring out the worst in us as well the conditions that keep us calm. Design an environment that supports our best needs
4. Manage energy – a. Food – hunger or heavy email; time of the day and sleep;
 - a) Fill yourself – pack your snacks or eat to keep energy levels up to focus on conversation partner
 - b) Healthy body – focused mind – prioritize your well being
 - c) Catch yourself and others in their prime time
 - d) Postpone the conversation if required and be honest by stating why (eg this meeting is important for me – is it ok do first thing in the morning (based on prime time)

2. Trust

- ❖ Trust in ourselves;
 - ❖ to have faith that we will remember what's necessary
 - ❖ Confidence that we will pay attention to the right cues
 - ❖ Let go of the anxiety that will forget an important insight
- ❖ Pinpoint the emotions – Remember the emotions in the conversation (Brain remembers emotions quite well – better than details)
- ❖ Set aside time for later –best bet is to set aside time to capture the details of the conversation to briefly jot down your thoughts or even de-brief with a friend/teammate while the specifics are still fresh
- ❖ Take your thoughts less seriously – when a thought arises, we loose the present, re-assure with a mantra – *If it's really important, it will come back to me.* Typically, thought comes back.
- ❖ Emergency emotions – Gently let your conversation partner know where your thinking is – take a pause and say “ I just realized that... let me make this call...” or “I completely forgot that.. Let me quickly jot down “ instead of trying to remember. (remember to be judicious – should not look as forever distracted)

3. Patience

- If Trust helps us to more fully receive what others have to say, patience is what we offer in return
- Techniques for dose of patience
 - Wind down, not Up – let the thoughts come, let them through without judgement and remind yourself to be in the present
 - Wait and see – count to ten and see what can be learnt by staying present and observing
 - Forget mindreading -

Observe as you Listen



Key to Empathetic listening is to always counterbalance what people say with what they do



Look out for emotional indicators – focus on powers of observation on emotions

1. Body language – non-verbal, gestural cues
2. Word choice – the language used
3. Voice and tone – tenor, pitch



1. Body Language

1. Window into the soul zone – facial expressions hold a lot of meaning; especially eye contact
2. Self-regulating zone – seemingly absent-minded fidgeting may mean something more in mind
3. Alliance zone – mirroring – natural sub-conscious process in which human mimic each other's body language
4. Engagement zone – feet are the most honest part of the body and tell the strongest story about a person's true intentions

Observe as you Listen



2. Word Choice – words people use tell us a lot about their beliefs, opinions, emotions and even their values.

1. Broad Statements – Phrases like “I like it”, “its good”, “sure” and “whatever” are often signals that there is more to be said. Gently follow up to get more clarity
2. Apologetic and flattering language – Apologetic and flattering language can be a signal of discomfort and a reflection of our very human desire to please others. Reinforce to the conversation partner, why their real and complete perspective is valuable
3. Stalling – act of speaking in vague terms to slow or derail a conversation for own purposes. Used to self-protect or protect others, it is a mark of hesitation. Signs of stalling – affirming (acknowledging instead of direct response), parroting (asking the same question), Deflecting (responding to a different question than what’s asked)
4. Bolstering Statements – Phrases such as “to be honest”, “to tell you the truth” are often used to admit how it’s felt. When used in excess, it may be a sign that conversation partner is trying hard to convince they are being honest but are not. Hearing a bolstering statement be sure to incorporate other cues like body language, voice/tone and what’s known about the conversation partner
5. Displacement phrases - Phrases such as “you say”, “you always” and “you never” are often used to displace a feeling about the conversation partner than about others. Keep the conversation going and dig deeper into the underlying emotion
6. Pacing – words pace up either when the conversation partner is overwhelmed or is upset by the situation on hand.

Clarify your role

Default Listening Mode – influenced by temperament, how socialized and cultural expectations. Chances are it started to take form during childhood, in response to early relationships, environment around, reinforcement from time to time throughout the lives

Clarify your role

❑ Tips to adopt to conversation partner needs to a discussion

- ❑ 1. Common Default listening modes – listen when these modes surface and with
- ❑ 2. Listen for hidden needs – before responding or acting understand what conversation partner is seeking and what role needs to played in meeting those need
- ❑ 3. Inform your Intuition – to put informed intuition together and evaluate what's needed –
- ❑ 4. Catch Cues – when sings are uncertain, listen to uncover conversation partner underlying needs
- ❑ 5. Ask Conversation partner to spell out – ask explicit questions to the conversation partner for direction on how best to respond
- ❑ 6. Wait for an opening – wait for break in the conversation partner talking to get the intent right
- ❑ 7. Adopt in real time- once conversation partner need is identified, adapt response in real time
- ❑ 8. Shift modes – acknowledge the understanding of what's needed and then offer an alternative how to respond
- ❑ 9. When in doubt bear witness – allow conversation partner to express and bear witness to their emotions

Common Default listening modes

- ❑ Tips to adopt to conversation partner needs to a discussion
 - ❑ 1. Common Default listening modes – listen when these modes surface and with whom –
 - ❑ a. Explainers – have an answer for everything
 - ❑ b. Validator – Natural cheerleaders always on conversation partner side – skew the perspective and even stunt personal growth
 - ❑ c. Identifier – likens their experience to the conversation partner – “I know exactly what you mean “...
 - ❑ d. Problem solver – have a solution for everything and are perfect sounding board to make progress and improve an idea
 - ❑ e. Nurse – puts other’s needs over theirs
 - ❑ f. Defuser – known to play down tense or uncomfortable situations
 - ❑ g. Mediator – look at things from all angles and assume good intent
 - ❑ h. Empaths – uncanny way of tuning into other’s emotional experience
 - ❑ i. Interrupter – always one step ahead in thinking
 - ❑ j. Interviewer – ask conversation partner lot of questions
 - ❑ h. Day Dreamer – lost in thought during conversations

Inform your Intuition

3. Inform your Intuition – to put informed intuition together and evaluate what's needed

- ☐ a. Conversation partner personal history – does this person come to me for advice ? Tend to minimize their emotions and quickly move on
- ☐ b. Current Situation – observe verbal and non-verbal cues like body language, word choice and voice quality to determine what the conversation partner is feeling now
- ☐ c. Unique qualities and characteristics – what attributes you possess that make uniquely suited to meet conversation partner need

Deepen the Conversation

- Connecting questions help us go deeper – given conversation partner wiggle room to answer as much they like without projecting assumptions/experience onto them
- Three connecting questions to leverage in conversation
 - Exploratory questions
 - Encouraging questions
 - Reflection questions

Exploratory and encouraging questions

- Beginning a question with “how” or “what” are unbiased – they neither presume an answer upfront nor do they suggest a binary outcome (yes or no)
- Encouraging Phrases – gently open a path for conversation partner to say more.
 - Example – say more about that; tell me what it means to you

Reflection questions

- ❑ to provoke reflection and complement exploratory and encouraging questions
- ❑ work by directly prompting conversation partner to think through the topic on hand
- ❑ careful not to offer more than one either or pairing at a time

Stay Flexible

- ✓ Incorporate new information – make necessary space to receive new information from conversation partner instead of clinging to existing known information
- ✓ Reassess you go – gut check whether set of questions/responses remain relevant based on what's learnt from conversation partner
- ✓ Look for cues – is the conversation receptive or seem to be lost/distracted
- ✓ Learn from conversation de-tours – de-tours indicate conversation partner is bored
- ✓ Get comfortable with silence – silence opens the space with conversation partner.
- ✓ Change the surroundings – a. taking leisure walks b. venture outdoors c. break eye contact
- ✓ Let go of the plan – a. embrace the unknown b. show support c. don't ask the same question twice

Confirm your comprehension

- ❖ Two-track conversations – what's heard by listener and what conversation partner are talking about the same thing but are not. Best way is confirming with conversation partner the understanding.
- ❖ Establish context – a. Scope and goals – what's the purpose of this discussion ?
- ❖ Listen for important cues – a. scan for body language, voice and tone
- ❖ Identify key themes – synthesize what's heard
- ❖ Connect ideas –
- ❖ Focus on the Heart - listen how the conversation partner feels
- ❖ Play it back – summarize what's heard neutrally, without bias and use conversation partner vocabulary

Guide the conversation

- ❑ Redirecting – makes someone aware of where they are in the conversation (spinning on a topic or going off track)
- ❑ Give a reminder – coax the conversation partner towards what's really on their mind. Example : you mentioned you wanted to talk about..
- ❑ Apply pressure – example I want to be mindful of your time let's talk through.... Now
- ❑ Re-direct to stop spinning – redirect conversation partner to see their problem spot
- ❑ Reframe – re-frame the situation example – what happens if we think about it from this angle ?
- ❑ Redirect to include others -

Make an Exit and difficult conversations

Intentionally left blank as an encouragement for readers to read the book.



Thank you

SHRINIVAS SATHYA SUSARLA

Disclaimer: 1. This is just a summary; for better understanding highly recommend reading the full book
2. The summary is based on my learning, what resonates with me after reading the book
3. Please excuse for any errors or mis-representation

