

6 top tips for how to listen well

1 Approach important conversations with curiosity

When you exchange judgment for curiosity, you open your mind and become a better listener. Approach the conversation with the simple goal of wanting to know more about what the other person thinks.

2 Give your full attention

There is a ton of research confirming multitasking is a myth. Stay present and focus on the person talking to you. Don't worry about what comes next. Listen with the goal of hearing, not responding. How you stand, the way you move your eyes, when you lean in, and hand motions all impact your ability to hear. These gestures also communicate to the other person that you are engaged and listening.

3 Ask what the person needs

My hubby and I often begin a discussion with the question, "Is this a listening or fixing conversation?" We laugh, but it's a great way to set up our expectations for what's to come.

4 Use silence

Mind blowing fact: The words listen and silent contain the same letters. Coincidence? Taking a few beats before responding in a conversation allows you to comprehend fully what the other person said. It also communicates that what was said had an impact.

5 Park your ego

Avoid the temptation to respond to someone's story or experience with one of your own. We sometimes do this to show empathy, but it can convey that what you have to say is more important or valid. Take time to hear the whole story from someone else before sharing your own.

6 Take in more than words

We communicate with more than our words. Listening to someone involves seeing the emotion behind how they hold their body, where they are looking, and their facial expressions. Also, absorb the words and phrases they choose, which can reveal unspoken thoughts and feelings.