

Your Journey to Self-Determination

Course 3: Listening for Understanding

Lessons 1-2

Lesson 1

Slide 1

Narrator

Welcome to the Listening for Understanding Course. In this first lesson, we'll go over what we mean by listening for understanding and why it is so important for your relationships and having greater say in your life.

Slide 2

Narrator

Imagine you need a ride to practice this week. You ask your friend: "So, do you think I can get a ride with you tomorrow?" While you are asking, your friend gets a text and glances down at his phone. He lifts his head up and says, "Sure, no problem." You respond, "Great, thanks." The next day, you are waiting to get picked up and your friend doesn't show. You text your friend. "Hey, where are you?" Your friend responds, "At practice... where are you?" You become angry and respond, "Waiting 4U to pick me up!!!!"

Slide 3

Narrator

This scene shows one of the challenges we face when communicating with others. Despite our best efforts to communicate clearly, there are times when the message gets lost. So, what went wrong here?

- A. [The message that was sent wasn't very clear.](#)
- B. [The listener was distracted and didn't really hear the question.](#)
- C. [Your friend forgot to ask his mom.](#)

Slide 3 Responses

So, what went wrong here?

Response to Option A. (The message that was sent wasn't very clear.)- No, that's not it. The breakdown in communication happened because the listener was distracted and didn't really hear the question.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option B. (The listener was distracted and didn't really hear the question.)- Yes, that's right. The listener was completely distracted and didn't hear the question.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option C. (Your friend forgot to ask his mom.)- No, that's not it. The breakdown in communication happened because the listener was distracted and didn't really hear the question.

[Continue](#)

Slide 4

Narrator

Many activities require listening skills. We need them to effectively communicate, solve problems, or resolve conflicts. You may think you can do several things at the same time, but our brains aren't wired that way. It isn't possible to listen well and do something else at the same time.

Slide 5

Narrator

Listening well is an active process that requires the listener to pay close attention, understand the message being sent, and then, respond to what is being said.

Slide 6

Narrator

The first step in listening is hearing what is being said. Sometimes, there are a variety of competing sounds and messages that you need to sort through. You need to decide what is important to pay attention to and what should be filtered out.

Not everyone can focus or pay attention for a long time. Also, how people filter information varies greatly from person to person. Many times, listeners are not receiving the entire message that was sent. This makes communication very difficult.

Slide 7

Narrator

Next, the listener needs to understand the message. This requires paying attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages. It also involves thinking about whether this information makes sense. Does it fit with what you know? For example, someone yells, “Fire!” at the same time you smell smoke. You are most likely going to think that this is important information, because it matches things that you know to be true.

Slide 8

Narrator

Now let’s see if you can find the *two* listening for understanding myths.

1. [Checking to see if the message matches what you know to be true is part of the listening process.](#)
2. [Listening is needed to communicate effectively, solve problems, and resolve conflicts.](#)
3. [You can listen effectively while you are doing something else.](#)
4. [Hearing information and deciding what is important are parts of the listening process.](#)
5. [Everyone filters information in the same way.](#)
6. [Understanding the message requires you to pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages.](#)

Slide 8 Responses

1. **Checking to see if the message matches what you know to be true is part of the listening process.**

This statement is true. [Try again.](#)

2. **Listening is needed to communicate effectively, solve problems, and resolve conflicts.**

This statement is true. [Try again.](#)

3. **You can listen effectively while you are doing something else.**

Congratulations! You found the myth. People can't listen effectively while doing something else.

[Go back](#)

[Continue](#)

4. **Hearing information and deciding what is important are parts of the listening process.**

This statement is true. [Try again.](#)

5. **Everyone filters information in the same way.**

Congratulations! You found the myth. People filter information in different ways.

[Go back](#)

[Continue](#)

6. **Understanding the message requires you to pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages.**

This statement is true. [Try again.](#)

Slide 9

You've completed your first lesson of the *Listening for Understanding* course.

Lesson 2

Slide 1

Narrator

Welcome to the Listening for Understanding Course. In this second lesson, we'll go over ways you can show others that you are really listening to what they are saying.

Slide 2

Narrator

When someone takes time to really listen to us, it shows us that they care and respect us. But what exactly does this look like?

Slide 3

Narrator

In order to listen for understanding, you must first be interested in what is being said. If not, you'll likely tune out after a short period of time. Maintaining focus is hard even when you are interested in the topic. If you are anything like me, your mind wanders at the most inconvenient times.

Next, you must be open to the possibility of new ideas. To stay open-minded, try to set aside your personal beliefs and opinions while the other person is talking.

When someone is explaining a situation, listen carefully for what is behind what is being said. Why is this important to this person?

And lastly, stay quiet and wait a little bit before responding. This allows the speaker to feel heard, and allows you as the listener, time to process and form an appropriate response. Staying quiet shows you value their message enough to give it your full attention.

Slide 4

Narrator

There are ways to show a speaker that you care about them and are engaged in the conversation. Nonverbal messages, like nodding your head or maintaining eye contact, are great ways to show you are listening. Another way to respond to the speaker is to ask open-ended questions about what was said. Open ended questions can't be answered with "yes" or "no" and usually result in answers that are longer than one or two words. They allow the speaker to go wherever she or he wants to go with an answer. This is a great way to get more information and continue the conversation.

Slide 5

Narrator

Probably the most powerful strategy a listener can use is called reflective listening. When you reflect or repeat back the content, emotions, and meaning of the speaker's message, it achieves two things. First, it gives the speaker a chance to correct information that was misheard. For example, after listening to your friend, you might say, "It sounds like you are upset because I didn't invite you to go with us to the movies?" Your friend responds by saying, "Not just the movies... you haven't included me in anything lately. It feels like you don't want to hang out with me anymore." Here, reflective listening gave the speaker a chance to clarify his or her concern. Reflective listening can also show the speaker that the message was heard and understood.

Slide 6

Narrator

What gets in the way of effective listening? The biggest barrier is interrupting the speaker. When a speaker is interrupted, the entire message can be lost or the speaker can lose track of an important part of the message. You can interrupt by commenting too much or too often. Asking too many questions or finishing a thought or idea for the speaker can also be interruptions. There is a fine line between interrupting and responding so the speaker knows you are engaged. Using body language such as a head nod, or a smile is a great non-verbal response that will not interrupt the speaker. You can also use short verbal responses that encourage the speaker to continue. For example, you might say something like “Yes,” “I understand,” or even “Uh-huh”.

Slide 7

Narrator

Debating can also get in the way of listening. When we are so focused on how we can argue for our position or argue against the other person’s, we stop listening for understanding.

Or, we might try to problem solve before a person finishes speaking. Although we mean well, this can get in the way of listening for understanding. Sometimes people just want to be heard, and do not want you to give advice or offer a solution.

Slide 8

You’ve completed your second lesson of the *Listening for Understanding* course.