

10 WAYS TO BETTER LISTENING

By Dana Bristol-Smith

At one point or another you've probably heard the following "You were given two ears and one mouth for a reason; to listen twice as much as you speak." How many of us actually listen twice as much as we speak?

We are so busy thinking about what we are going to say next that we don't even hear everything a speaker says. We use a speaker's comments as a spring board to jump to what we want to talk about. We listen at 125-250 words per minute, but think at 1000-3000 words per minute.

Conversation: a vocal competition in which the one who is catching his breath is called the listener.
-- Anonymous

So, how do we improve our listening skills? Here are 10 ways to be a better listener.

10 Ways to Be a Better Listener

1. Don't interrupt the speaker.
2. Don't change the subject in the middle of a conversation. Make sure that subject is finished before moving on.
3. Check your understanding by paraphrasing what the speaker said. So if I understand you correctly, you said...
4. Pay full attention to the speaker.
5. Maintain eye contact with the speaker.
6. Don't jump to conclusions before the speaker is finished speaking.
7. Watch for emotional reactions and keep them in check.
8. Don't say: That reminds me...or that's nothing, let me tell you about... Listening is not thinking about one-upping the speaker.
9. Ask probing questions to gain understanding.
10. Remember the golden rule, it applies here too. Listen to others as you would like to have them listen to you.

A final thought from A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

You know, it's at times like this when I'm trapped in a Vogon airlock with a man from Betelgeuse and about to die of asphyxiation in deep space that I really wish I'd listened to what my mother told me when I was young!

Why, what did she tell you?

I don't know, I didn't listen!