Self-Inventory of Listening Habits

The purpose of this inventory is to help you gain a better understanding of your listening habits. When you have completed it, you should be able to describe your listening habits, and you should have established a priority of listening habits to improve. This is, of course, a subjective inventory and not an objective test.

Directions: Read this list, and place a check in front of each habit that you now have, even if you use that habit only a third to a half of the time. Then, re-read the habits you have checked, and place two checks in front of those habits that you think you perform almost all of the time that you spend listening, perhaps 75%-100% of your listening time.

1. I prepare myself for listening by focusing my thoughts on the speaker and the expected topic and committing my time and energy to listen.

2. I ask questions about what I have just heard before letting the speaker know what I heard and understood.

3. I follow the speaker by reviewing what he or she has said; concentrating on what the speaker is saying and anticipating what he or she is going to say.

4. I analyze what I am hearing and try to interpret it to get the real meaning before I let the speaker know what I heard and understood.

5. I look at the speaker’s face, eyes, body posture, and movement, and I listen to his/her other vocal cues.

6. I think about other topics and concerns while listening.

7. I listen for what is not being said, as well as for what is being said.

8. I fake attention to the speaker, especially if I’m busy or if I think I know what the speaker is going to say.

9. I show in a physical way that I am listening and I try to help set the speaker at ease.

10. I listen largely for the facts and details, more than I listen for ideas and reasons.

11. I am aware of my own facial, body, and vocal cues that I am using while listening.

12. I evaluate and judge the wisdom or accuracy of what I have heard before checking out my interpretation with the speaker.

13. I avoid sympathizing with the speaker and making comments like, “I know just what you mean—the same thing has happened to me,” and then telling my story before letting the speaker know what I hear and understood.

14. I find myself assuming that I know what the speaker is going to say before he or she has finished speaking.

15. I accept the emotional sentiment of the speaker.

16. I think up arguments to refute the speaker so that I can answer as soon as he or she finishes.

17. I use “echo” or “mirror” responses to feedback to the speaker specific words and phrases the speaker has used that I need clarified.
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18. I am uncomfortable with and usually reject emotional sentiments of the speaker.

19. I paraphrase or summarize what I have heard before giving my point of view.

20. I am easily distracted by noise or by the speaker’s manner of delivery.

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Place an X in the blank by each number you have double checked

2____ 1____
4____ 3____
6____ 5____
8____ 7____
10____ 9____
12____ 11____
14____ 13____
16____ 15____
18____ 17____
20____ 19____

Now that you have an inventory of your effective listening habits (all of the *odd-numbered habits* you checked), your ineffective habits (all of the *even-numbered habits* that you have checked), your most effective listening habits (all of the *odd-numbered habits* you have checked twice), and your most ineffective listening habits (all of the *even-numbered habits* that you check twice).

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Excerpt from *The Power of Peer Mentoring, Peer Mentoring Resource Booklet, Faculty Mentor Program, Educational Opportunity Program*