



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LISTENING

September 20, 2018

Topic for this year:

Listen even when you disagree.

Modern community is disintegrating; people are lonelier; and social media are distracting from the honesty and connection of face-to-face listening and communication. Without relationship and connection, face-to-face interaction is only a thin presence, a limited human connection. We need experiences that can support community building--listening and dialogue are strong candidates.

Title: Listening to Opposing Viewpoints

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Subject: Listening to people that you disagree with

Interest Area: Personal, Professional and Education

Appropriate Age: Anyone can benefit from a “disagreeable” conversation even from a very young age. The idea is to choose something that is of concern to the person around this topic.

Time required: the time you will allow to this conversation depends on the participants and your situation.

Purpose

Objectives:

- Be able to listen to someone who has differing viewpoints, opinions, practices or beliefs with respect and in a way that allows each party to feel free to express their views.
- Understand that you can listen to someone you disagree with, understand their perspective, and still not agree with the person.
- Accept that there will be some topics that you will not be able to reach an agreement on.

Skill Development:

Develop emotional control through the ability to express opinions and beliefs in a way that allows others to hold differing viewpoints and opinions, without feeling threatened or disrespected.

Materials Needed

Material: No materials are needed, but you could download the “ListenMark” and keep those listening suggestions in mind and/or near you.

Location: A comfortable location that will allow participants to share thoughts and opinions in a non-threatening, private place and one that enables everyone to hear each other. Consider offering light refreshments.

Number of participants: Any number of people can participate, as long as people can hear each other and have the opportunity to speak as well as listen.

Instructions

1. Invite someone that you disagree with to have a conversation (or a group of people with differing opinions). Let the others know that you would like to understand their position.
2. Before you engage in listening to someone that you disagree with, ask yourself why a “reasonable, rational, logical person” could possibly hold a different belief, especially this belief. This will help you adopt an attitude of curiosity and help you be able to listen with a more open mind.
3. Remind yourself that you can do an excellent job of listening, and still disagree with the person.
4. Before you engage in the conversation, set a goal of being able to listen to the person’s statement of their beliefs and summarize or restate what the person said back to the person without judging or disagreeing or evaluating--just listening and understanding.
5. Ask for clarification if you don’t understand their exact position.
6. Again, verify that you understand what the person has said (saying that you understand does not mean that you really do understand). Let them know that you have listened and understood by restating what they have said back to them. Ask if you have captured what they said.
7. Once you are sure that you understand the position, explore where you agree. Even if they are minor points, start with what you agree on. This helps keep the conversation on a logical plane, rather than an emotional one, and helps keep the dialogue open.
8. At the end of the conversation, summarize what you have learned from the speaker. You don’t have to agree with the position. Again, your goal is to understand the position.
9. If you are trying to collaborate, solve a problem, or just want to continue on good terms with the individual, revisit the points that you agree on. Then explore the possibilities for compromise, cooperation, and collaboration.
10. You can’t really solve a problem from someone else’s perspective until you understand that person’s perspective. **That should be your listening goal.**

Listening Guidelines and Tools (How to Listen while Disagreeing)

Follow this plan:

1. Listen with an open mind. Keep your body language, facial expression, and tone of voice neutral and open.
2. Try to be objective.
3. Think about the speaker's credibility and intention, but don't start by assuming that they are not credible or have negative intentions. Remember, you want to learn about this speaker's viewpoint.
4. Next examine the speaker's use of evidence, reasoning, and emotional appeals.
5. Notice which statements can be verified as facts. Even if they aren't true, factual statements can be verified as true or false.
6. Notice which statements are based on emotions ("I just feel that way." "I believe this way.")
7. Identify which statements use faulty reasoning.
8. If you need to disagree, say it in a non-hostile way, "I disagree with that." "I have a different perspective."

See Templates & Guides <http://internationaldayoflistening.com/templates-guides/>
10 Listening Tips <http://internationaldayoflistening.com/10-listening-tips/>

Resources

International Day of Listening website: www.internationaldayoflistening.com
International Listening Association website: www.listen.org

Outcomes and Evaluation (What should participants have accomplished, and how will they measure success?)

You will have been successful if you can restate the other person's viewpoint to their satisfaction, if you have learned something, and if you still have at least a respectful relationship with the other person.

Please share your experience with the rest of the world.



International Listening Association

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