

Climbing the Listening Ladder

I wrote in my book " Embracing the Mystery " that there was nothing as flattering or as rare as the undivided attention of another. The fact is that people just don't listen well. I think it was Mark Twain who wrote that a bore is someone who wants to talk about himself when I want to talk about myself. How many times have you experienced someone asking you a question, not out of a genuine concern for what you have to say, but rather as an opportunity for them to flood you with their thoughts and opinions on an issue?

People have a hunger to be listened to- to have someone care enough to suspend their own agenda in the interest of another's. Sadly, such unselfish, attentive people are few..

I once had a man at a party come up to me and say that my wife, Carol was a terrific conversationalist. On the way home that same evening I told Carol what he had said and asked her what she did to give him that impression. She thought for a moment and said, " All I did was ask him questions about his life and listen to his answers. From his answers I asked more questions." Therein lies the secret to good conversation ...LISTENING WELL.

From Carol's insight I have developed what I call the listening ladder. Climb the listening ladder and you will be on your way to improved social interaction.

THE LISTENING LADDER

L. Look at the person speaking to you.. This alone sends out the message that you are focussed and involved.

A. Ask additional questions flowing from answers given to your original starting questions. Remember that you learn what to say by listening to what has been said.

D. Don't interrupt. The only time an interruption is acceptable is when you require clarification.

D. Don't change the subject. The speaker will indicate when they are finished their story.

E. Empathize with the speaker. Short phrases such as, " How interesting." How exciting." " You must be so proud." Send the speaker the message that you are an empathic, caring listener.

R. Respond to what is said verbally and non-verbally. A simple nod or leaning slightly toward the speaker indicates interest and attention. Add to this such phrases as, " I see." "Really?" " Is that right?" and you enrich your response.

In conclusion I want to make something clear. Conversation is a two way affair. Most conversations are monologues conducted in the presence of an observer. If, after a reasonable period of time, the one speaking isn't willing to ask you a question and become a listener then conclude the interaction and move on. I usually give the one speaking ten minutes. If, after that time, they haven't asked me a question or my opinion I say something like, " It was nice chatting with you. Conversation MUST be reciprocal.

I like the story of the self-possessed Hollywood star who was heard saying to an admirer, "Enough about me talking about me. I'd like to hear you talk about me for awhile." There is a great deal of truth in this little story.

Good luck climbing the Listening ladder. The view from the top is fantastic.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Mike Moore is an international speaker on the role of humor in human relations. Mike's articles and cartoons have appeared in publications throughout the world. For more on what Mike can do for your organization visit <http://motivationalplus.com/cgi/a/t.cgi?motplusarticles>