



## **BEFOR you listen, get ready to listen!**

The listener controls most conversations. This may be a surprising idea, but how much or how intimately the talker talks depends on how well the listener is listening. So if you want to hear from someone, sharpen your listening skills **BEFOR** you ask how things are going. Pay attention to these five points.

### **B = Body Posture**

- Keep an open, attentive body posture.
- Relax, don't fidget, and don't cross your arms.
- Lean forward and face the speaker.
- Be aware of the rules for closeness in the speaker's culture. Let the speaker set the distance between you.

### **E = Eye Contact**

- Know the rules about eye contact for the culture you are in.
  - In some cultures, you should look the person in the eye. This lets them know that you are listening, and that you care about what they have to say. Look away once in a while.
  - In other cultures, it is rude to look into someone's eyes, and may cause discomfort or anger.
- Make the eye contact that will make the other person feel most comfortable.
- Don't stare.
- Some people find it easier to talk when both of you are looking forward, not at each other, for example, in a parked car, walking side by side, or sharing a bench.

### **F = Following Along**

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| <b>verbal</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make comments such as "I see," "Me too," "Right on."</li><li>• Ask questions relevant to topic.</li><li>• Paraphrase what you heard the speaker say.</li></ul>                                     |
| <b>non-verbal</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct your attention to the person talking.</li><li>• Use gestures and facial expression: nodding, smiling, frowning, etc.</li><li>• Use your tone of voice to show you are interested.</li></ul> |
| <b>meta-verbal</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read between the lines; respond to what the speaker does not say.</li><li>• Notice when the words spoken don't match the message sent (e.g., sarcasm).</li></ul>                                   |

## **O = On the Level**

- The aim is to be equal, not to be superior or inferior to the other person.
- Move so that you are physically on the same level—both sitting or both standing; if you are listening to a child, either lift the child up to your height or squat or get down on your knees.
- Show equality by your tone of voice, choice of words, levelling posture.



## **R = Relaxation**

- Create a relaxed atmosphere. For example, find a quiet spot; arrange the seating so you can look at each other easily, etc.
- Let the person know you have time to listen.
- Keep your focus on the speaker; ignore distractions.



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