

Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture – 20
Communication: Active Listening

Hello everyone, welcome back to my course on Developing Soft Skills and Personality this is NPTEL mode course from IIT, Kanpur. I am Ravichandran giving you this course; we are on fourth week of this course module number 2, lecture number 20.

Now this week the focus is on communication and how soft skills are related to communication, in that sense we started discussing about listening as a very integral part of communication and soft skills. In the last lecture we looked at listening as an integral part of communication while talking about that as an integral part of communication along with reading, speaking and writing, I also cleared you some misconceptions about listening.

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For instance people have the misconception that to be a good speaker you do not have to be a listener at all, that is a gross misconception which I cleared it and there are other such misconceptions like only speaking consumes energy not listening because people think that listening is a passive activity and then it does not consume any energy at all.

And then we focused on the difference between hearing and listening. So, hearing as you might have understood that is basically a physical activity and then it does not involve any conscious mind process. So, it can be even unconscious and it does not disturb our any other activity. While listening is a mental activity that involves reception, selection, organization, assimilation interpretation, evaluation and response; the first step to become a good listener I said is to keep in one's mind a very open framework. I simply said keep your mind open and towards the conclusion I said that keep it free from any kind of prejudice, I gave the story of beta one to illustrate how a doctor could have actually went for abortion and actually would have killed a genius if the concerned people were not really open minded and did not listen to people without any prejudice.

So, keeping this in mind that your mind should be open and then it should not have any kind of prejudice let us move ahead and look more on effective communication.

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Effective Communication

Research indicates that about 60% of listening is involved in Effective Communication.

Only 25% of our listening capacity is used by us.

People don't remember 50% of what they heard within a gap of 8 hours!

The slide features a dark background with white and yellow text. In the top right corner, there is a small inset image showing two women in conversation. The text is presented in a clean, sans-serif font, with key statistics highlighted in yellow.

There are some interesting facts about effective communication that is correlated with improving your listening skills as well as you becoming an active listener. This module particularly, in this lecture, I am just going to focus or I am just going to make you become an active listener. So, I will tell you more about this overall if you look at effective communication there are some startling facts about this communication factor that is coming from various researches. So, one research indicates that about 60 percent of listening is involved in effective communication, this means in effective

communication - a communication that is effective, successful, meaningful, fruitful, 60 percent the major part is actually listening and not speaking. People think that it is rather speaking that place of predominant role, but it is the other way around.

Now, this is effective communication ineffective communication you can understand the listening component becomes lesser and lesser could be thirty percent twenty percent ten percent and even zero no listening at all. So, there are people who try to give you an impression that they are listening to you, but actually they do not listen to you at all. So, that actually amounts to ineffective communication.

What is the other interesting factor about effective communication and where listening is involved, another research shows that only 25 percent of our listening capacity is used by us. This is a startling factor because when 60 percent of listening is involved in terms of effective communication most of the times we do not use 100 percent of our listening capacity and we are under using our listening capacity only about 20 percent of it we have been using. Now this should alert you this should give you a kind of self awareness and then you should keep asking am I doing this, am I all the time not utilizing my listening and am I all the time maximizing my talking and minimizing my listening, keep asking and then try to maximize your listening part in any effective communication.

The other interesting fact that has been told to us based on a research is that people do not remember 50 percent of what they heard just within a gap of 8 hours. This means if you hear something even right. Now in about 80 hours you are about to remember only 50 percent of it, now how do you remember it 100 percent? So, there are ways which come under skills which we talked in terms of active listening, one of the most important trait to become an active listener and then to remember things 100 percent is to make use of notes. So, even when you are listening to somebody just before you in a kind of face to face conversation if it is an important talk there is no harm in keeping a small paper, small notepad and then you just take notes about important words keywords and phrases you will be able to remember almost 90 percent if not the 100 percent.

So, these three facts that only 60 percent of listening is there in terms of effective communication, whereas 25 percent of listening capacity is only used by us despite the fact that 60 percent is required in any effective communication and that we generally remember only half of what we heard that is after gap of 8 hours should be things that

alert you and should try to make you a person who is interested in active communication, active listening.

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Good communication is good listening

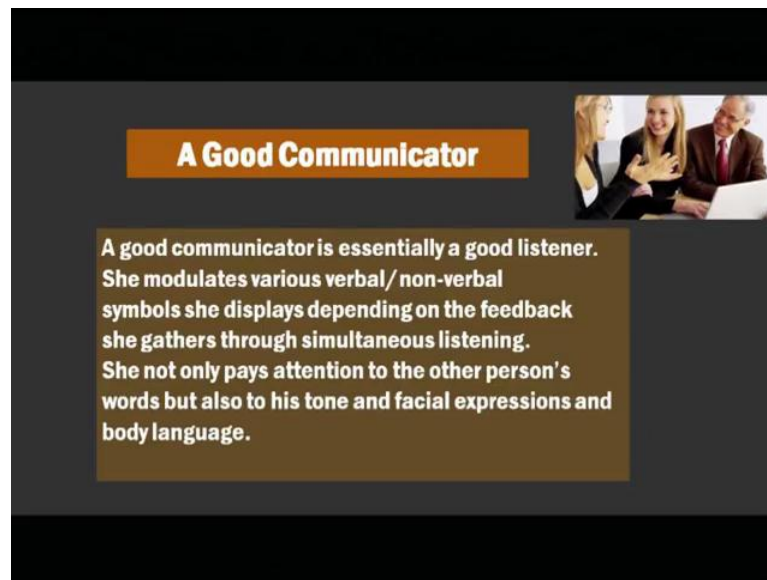
One of the major skills in effective communication is the ability to listen well.

- *Listening is the “receiving” part of communication.
- *It is receiving information through your ears and eyes.
- *Good listening is an active, integrated communication skill that demands energy and know-how.
- *It is purposeful, powerful and productive.



Good communication in general itself is about good listening. One of the major skills in effective communication is the ability to listen well; listening as such is the receiving part of communication. In the lectures to come I will talk to you about communication process in which there is this sender and the receiver the sender you can assume is the speaker currently I am sending you something, but then the receiver is the one who receives it by listening. It is receiving information through your ears and eyes that is real good listening and good listening is an active integrated communication skill that demands energy and know how it is purposeful powerful and productive.

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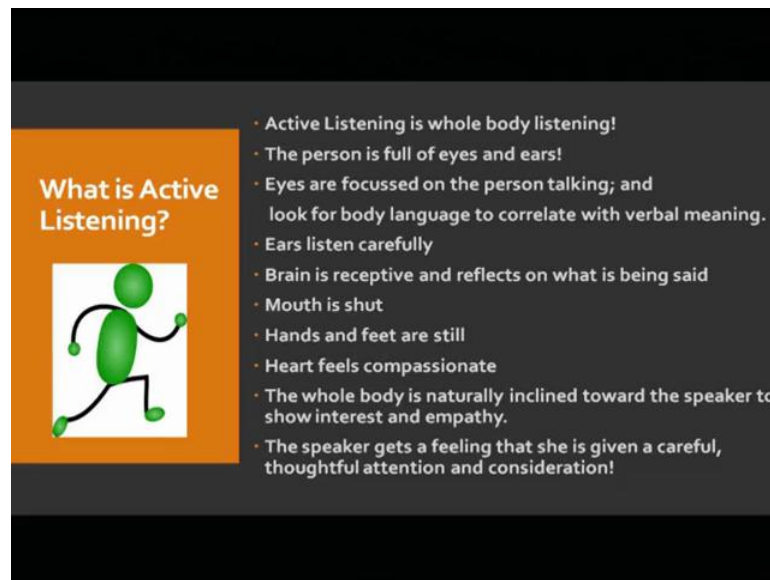
A Good Communicator

A good communicator is essentially a good listener. She modulates various verbal/non-verbal symbols she displays depending on the feedback she gathers through simultaneous listening. She not only pays attention to the other person's words but also to his tone and facial expressions and body language.

What are the traits of a good communicator if you could say somebody is a good communicator what do you look at that person; a good communicator is essentially a good listener. Whomever we call as a good communicator is actually a person who is very kind to listen to us she modulates various verbal non verbal symbols, she displaced depending on the feedbacks, she gathers through simultaneous listening. A good communicator not only pays attention to the other person s words, but also to his tone and facial expressions and body language.

In short a good communicator is very receptive and perceptive to not only the verbal part of communication, but also the non verbal part of communication and adapts adjust and responds to the cues that the speaker is giving when the other communicator is involved in listening.

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What is Active Listening?

- Active Listening is whole body listening!
- The person is full of eyes and ears!
- Eyes are focussed on the person talking; and look for body language to correlate with verbal meaning.
- Ears listen carefully
- Brain is receptive and reflects on what is being said
- Mouth is shut
- Hands and feet are still
- Heart feels compassionate
- The whole body is naturally inclined toward the speaker to show interest and empathy.
- The speaker gets a feeling that she is given a careful, thoughtful attention and consideration!

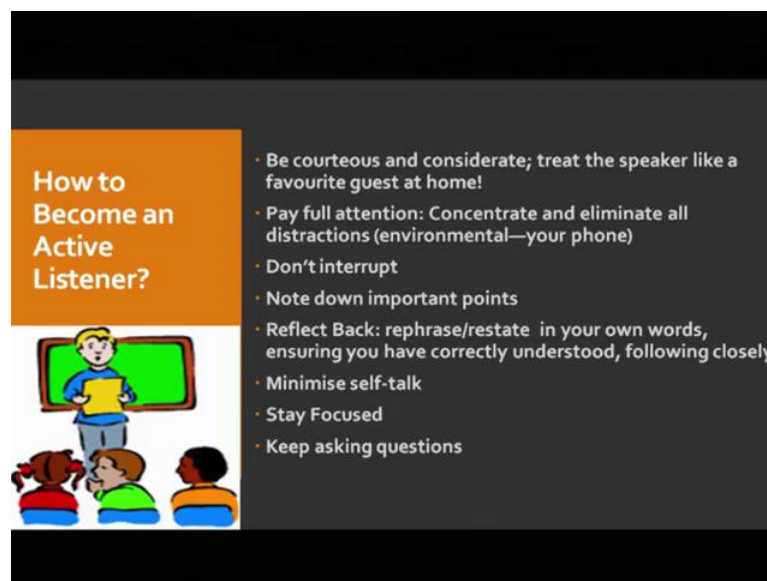
Now, the major concept of this lecture is about active listening and to make you develop your skills towards becoming an active listener what is active listening, how is it different from just listening? Now active listening is whole body listening when you listen you have put your entire mind, body, emotion, mental involvement everything is there the person is full of eyes and ears, what are the eyes doing? The eyes are focused on the person talking, the eyes are maintaining eye contact with the person giving the person a feeling that I am following you I am looking at you I am just listening to you and I am willing to respond to you the eyes look for body language also that is non verbal communication to correlate with verbal meaning.

What are the ears doing? The ears listen carefully it gives utmost care and what about the brain? The brain is receptive fully and reflects on what is being said it is receiving and then it is reflecting its thinking assimilating over ideas, but it is not reacting, it is not doing anything to stop the other person, why? Because the mouth is shut, for an active listener the lips remain closed most of the times except there are occasions such as seeking clarifications otherwise the mouth is shut the hands and feet are still. So, either they are closed or they are just resting on the lap they are crossed and then they are resting, the feet it is not shaking it is not moving they are just still they are at rest which means the hands or the feet or not in any way distracting the speaker's attention.

What about the heart? The heart is feeling compassionate the whole body is naturally

inclined toward the speaker to show interest and empathy. So, this means the body itself is slightly inclined leaning towards the other person to show that I am actually interested in your talk and I am very empathetic in listening to you. The speaker gets a feeling that she is given a careful, thoughtful, attention and consideration, the speaker feels comfortable because the speaker gets an idea that the other listener you as an active listener is giving a very careful, thoughtful attention and consideration to what the speaker is telling you.

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How to Become an Active Listener?

- Be courteous and considerate; treat the speaker like a favourite guest at home!
- Pay full attention: Concentrate and eliminate all distractions (environmental—your phone)
- Don't interrupt
- Note down important points
- Reflect Back: rephrase/restate in your own words, ensuring you have correctly understood, following closely
- Minimise self-talk
- Stay Focused
- Keep asking questions

The slide features an illustration of a male teacher standing at a green chalkboard, holding a yellow book. Three students (two girls and one boy) are seated in front of him, looking towards the board.

How to become an active listener? Some of the most important points if you could keep in mind and then reverse it in your mind whenever you are involved in a conversation and try to follow it will make you an active listener sooner or later. What are the key points in making you an active listener? First, be courteous and considerate be courteous and considerate, this means be very pleasing be very pleasant when the other person is talking to you and considerate. Sometimes a person may come and tell a story that is very tragic and the person maybe telling you in a very sobbing manner. So, be considerate be kind. So, do not respond in a manner that the other person feels uncomfortable; generally it is said that you should treat the speaker like your favorite guest at home. So, somebody who is so friendly or to whom you are very fond of that person is at your home and then the way you would like to talk to the person is the way you should try to talk to anybody who is coming in contact with you for a conversation.

Pay full attention concentrate and eliminate all distractions, if you are in the class this is much more important pay full attention to what the teacher is telling you, concentrate on the topics which are being discussed eliminate all distractions. So, somebody is passing by on the corridor. So, do not look at the person this side a beautiful bird is coming and sitting on a tree and chirping, do not be tempted to look at the bird pay, full attention completely concentrate on the thoughts which are being delivered to you, the ideas which are being communicated to you and eliminate all distractions which are environmental which are sometimes created by you.

For example, your phone - when somebody is talking to you have left your phone not in switched off mode not even in silent mode. So, what happens? The phone rings and then it disturbs the thought flow of the other person. So, you and then in a very impolite manner you just take it and then talk to the person on phone the other person is completely put off and then not in a mood to continue with the discussion then you put the phone and then you say that - I am sorry you just continue, other person says its and then you say that - no you were saying something the other person again says - I just forgot.

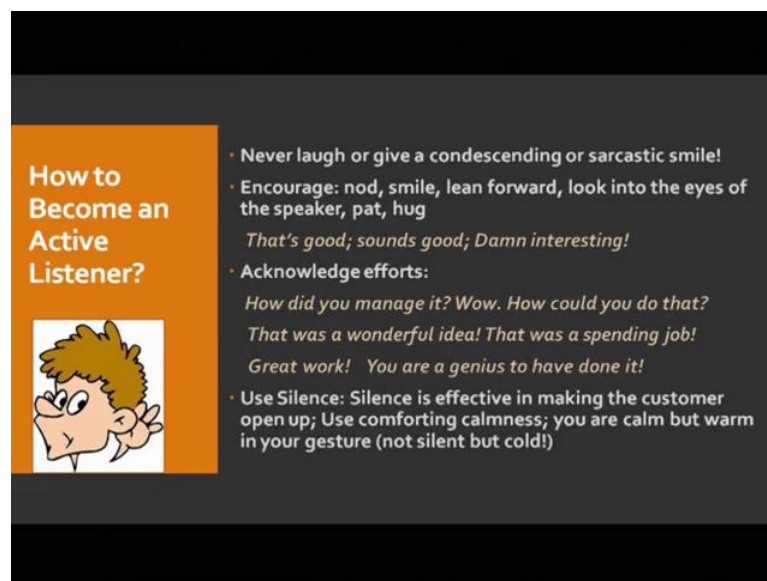
So, eliminate this kind of unnecessary distraction remove the phone put it in silent mode and any kind of distractions suppose it is coming from TV or music. So, try to go to a place where you can avoid all these things and when you are involved in the communication process do not interrupt, when the person is telling you something do not interrupt. Allow the person to complete whatever the other person wants to tell you and as I said before in order not to forget what the person tells you and remember 100 percent of what the other person is telling you note down important points the way you wanted use abbreviations, use short forms of words, use phrases, you do not have to write the complete sentence, but the way you would like to remember it some people even use a kind of flowchart to listen to the entire conversation again, they can recreate the entire talk just by noting down in the form of a flowchart. So, whatever manner you want you note down important points, but try to recollect by looking at the important points and then reflect back.

When somebody is talking to you for a long time, let us say it is a narration of a personal incident that happened to the other person or the person is trying to explain some difficult concept to you reflect back think over, roll back in your mind and then tell the

other person how much are you following this, rephrase tell it in a different manner, restate in your own words, try to ensure the other person that by doing this you have correctly understood what the other person is telling you that you are following the person closely. So, that is what is meant by reflecting back you try to rephrase what the person is saying. So, that the other person understands that he or she is following me and while doing this minimize self talk, avoid talk as much as possible minimize it do not talk about yourself, do not add any points which are not relevant to the conversation which is considered to be interesting for you, but do not do it at your sight.

Stay focused all the time just be attentive to the person only, keep your eyes the entire body focused to the person and keep asking questions especially to encourage the person or to seek clarifications you can ask some questions. But never laugh even if the person is making a mistake, you can laugh if the person is in a good mood to make you laugh by telling a joke.

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How to Become an Active Listener?

- Never laugh or give a condescending or sarcastic smile!
- Encourage: nod, smile, lean forward, look into the eyes of the speaker, pat, hug
 - That's good; sounds good; Damn interesting!*
- Acknowledge efforts:
 - How did you manage it? Wow. How could you do that?*
 - That was a wonderful idea! That was a spending job!*
 - Great work! You are a genius to have done it!*
- Use Silence: Silence is effective in making the customer open up; Use comforting calmness; you are calm but warm in your gesture (not silent but cold!)

But never laugh in a negative sense, the person commits a mistake there is a slip or the person makes something wrong and then immediately it evokes laughter in you never laugh or the person is saying something which in your opinion is very low to your level of thinking. So, do not give a condescending or sarcastic smile that will actually put off the other person; the other person can also feel humiliated and stop the conversation.

But on the other hand try to encourage how can you encourage? You can do that both by

verbal and non verbal communication the non verbal communication you can encourage very powerfully by nodding. So, when somebody is particularly the teacher is talking to you keep nodding, so that makes the teacher know that you are actively listening to the person smile if the person is known to you and a friend lean forward, indicating that you are interested look into the eyes of the speaker. Now if it is an informal one if you are the boss or if you are the senior person and if you are in the level slightly higher in terms of power relationship you can even pat on the shoulder or if it is like a between two close people even you can give a hug just to make the other person feel comfortable, you can just in between when you do that the other person feels encouraged to talk, the other person feels the warmth in you. Verbally you can say while talking you can say oh that is good sounds wonderful damn interesting keep going. So, these are phrases that will make the other person feel encouraged.

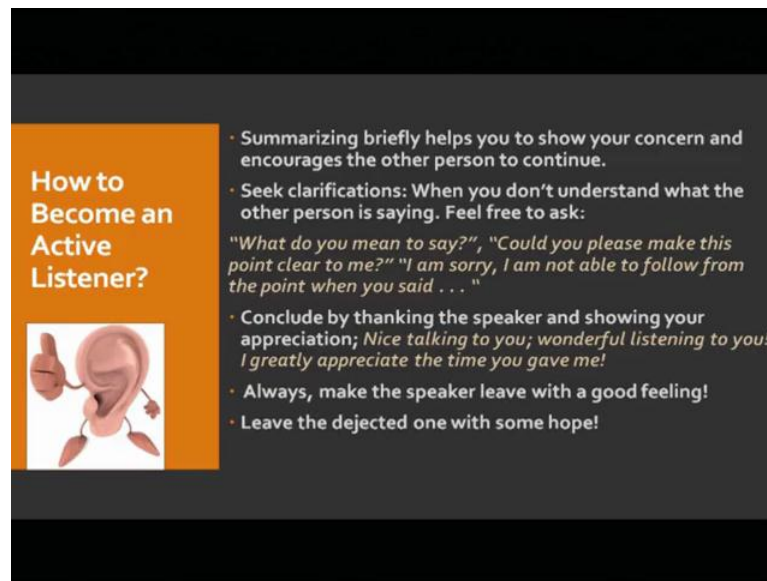
At the same time try to acknowledge efforts if the person is telling you that he or she did something remarkable acknowledge it then and there and in fact, you ask more question so that they can talk more about what they have done. Questions like how did you manage it wow, was not that wonderful, how could you do that, that was a wonderful idea, that was a terrific thing to do, that was a splendid job, great work, you are a genius to have done it. Now acknowledging efforts again we will make the person to come out and then tell you more about what the person have achieved or what the person has done.

Use silence many people think that you should as I said keep talking or do something as an active listener, but silence is one of the most powerful weapons that an active listener can use silence in a very effective manner because silence can be kept in such a manner the customer if you are the business person or the client if you are a lawyer or somebody or a student if you are the teacher can actually open up. So, the person has come and if you keep all the talking and even if you talk to the other person as if you know whatever the other person has in his mind. So, the other person will not open up. So, use silence in a sense use silence as a kind of comforting calmness you are calm, but warm in your gesture in your behavior you show the warmth, but not silent in a cold sense not silent, but cold; but calm, but warm.

So, that will make you every person come to you and then share their opinion. You can also after sometime when the conversation is getting prolonged for a long time you can summarize briefly whatever the person is telling and that will also indicate that you are

showing some concern and then you are letting the person feel encouraged and continue.

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How to Become an Active Listener?

- Summarizing briefly helps you to show your concern and encourages the other person to continue.
- Seek clarifications: When you don't understand what the other person is saying. Feel free to ask:
"What do you mean to say?" "Could you please make this point clear to me?" "I am sorry, I am not able to follow from the point when you said . . ."
- Conclude by thanking the speaker and showing your appreciation; *Nice talking to you; wonderful listening to you! I greatly appreciate the time you gave me!*
- Always, make the speaker leave with a good feeling!
- Leave the dejected one with some hope!

Do not hesitate to seek clarifications especially when you do not understand what the other person is saying feel free to ask questions like what do you mean to say - could you please make this point clear to me, I am sorry I am not able to follow from this point when you said this, could you please re-explain or tell me again in a different manner, could you give me a different illustrative example so that I can understand. Now these are things that will make the other speaker open to you, come out with lot of thoughts and ideas which you would not have actually extracted from the other person if you did not use some of these active listening techniques.

Now, last but not the least many people miss out the concluding part, in my opinion that is the most important thing when you are going to conclude a conversation. Do not run do not rush do not show them that you just listened because the other person forced and talked to you. Give enough time, fix an appointment and then if you are busy do not give an appointment, but if you are free give them the time and then let the person speak and give them enough time, at the end of it conclude by thanking the speaker and showing your appreciation. You can say things like nice talking to you, wonderful listening to you; I greatly appreciate the time you gave me. Now this again makes the person feel that it was such a nice thing that the person came met you and talked to you. So, always make the speaker leave with a good feeling. So, the speaker should not go with the sense

of regret why did I come and talk to this person, all the time he is talking and then he is not letting me come out with my ideas, he is bombarding with his own ideas.

And last but not the least, if a person who is very dejected comes to you somewhat discouraged and then disappointed leave the dejected one with some hope. The person who comes to you when the person leaves should be different from the one who came to you for a talk, if you follow all these points you will become an active listener, you will eventually become a very effective communicator and you will be much soft or after in the company that is around you and you will be a very highly demand able employee in the circle of employers also. So, they are looking for people like you. So, develop this skill, active listening. As I try to conclude this I just want you to think over this small quote.

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When you talk you are only repeating what you already know. When you talk you are only repeating what you already know, but if you listen you may learn something new. So, keep this as your mantra, speak less, listen more, listen more.

Thank you for listening to me.