



Brenda Mamber – Listen To Learn



Listen to Learn

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*You cannot truly listen to anyone and do
anything else at the same time.*

-M. Scott Peck



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LOOK CLOSER – SEE ME- anonymous

What do you see, nurse, what do you see?
Are you thinking when you look at me—
A crabby old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice—“I’d do wish you’d try”.
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe.
Who unresisting or not, lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill,
Is that what you are thinking, is that what you see?
Then open your eyes nurse, YOU’RE NOT LOOKING AT ME.

I’ll tell you who I am, as I sit here so still;
As I am at your bidding, as I eat at your will,
I’m a small child of ten with a father and mother,
Brother and sister, who loved one another,
A young girl of 16 with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now a lover she’ll meet;
A bride soon at 20—my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promise to keep;
At 25 now I have young of my own,
Who need me to build a secure, happy home;
A woman at 30, my young now grows fast;
Bound to each other with ties that should last.

At 40, my young sons have grown and have gone,
But my man’s beside me to see I don’t mourn.
At 50 once more babies play round my knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead.
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.
For my young are still rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years and the love that I’ve known.
I’m an old woman now and nature is cruel—
‘Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body it crumbles, grace and vigor depart,
There is now a stone where once was a heart.
I think of the years all too few—gone too fast;
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurse, open and see,
Not a crabby old woman, look closer—SEE ME.



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When a client says...

Why me?

I don't know what to believe anymore.

Do you believe there is a heaven?

Do you believe in prayer?

When I was young I used to believe in God, now I'm not sure anymore.

I want to end this now. I don't want to cause any more misery for my family. I don't want to be helpless. I want to stop it while I'm still myself.

Do you believe God is punishing me?

If there is a God, why would he allow all the suffering in the world to continue? Why would he allow all the terrible killing of innocent people to continue?

Why does God want me to suffer? What possible good could come from this?

I'm afraid to die.

No one cares about me.

I'm afraid.

Don't leave me.

How will you reply?



JUST LISTEN

©By Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D. *Kitchen Table Wisdom, Stories That Heal*

I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention. And especially if it's given from the heart. When people are talking, there's no need to do anything but receive them. Just take them in. Listen to what they're saying. Care about it. Most times caring about it is even more important than understanding it. Most of us don't value ourselves or our love enough to know this. It has taken me a long time to believe in the power of simply saying, 'I'm so sorry,' when someone is in pain. And meaning it.

One of my patients told me that when she tried to tell her story people often interrupted to tell her that they once had something just like that happen to them. Subtly her pain became a story about themselves. Eventually she stopped talking to most people. It was just too lonely. We connect through listening. When we interrupt what someone is saying to let them know that we understand we move the focus of attention to ourselves. When we listen, they know we care. Many people with cancer talk about the relief of having someone just listen.

I have even learned to respond to someone crying by just listening. In the old days I used to reach for the tissues, until I realized that passing a person a tissue may just be another way to shut them down, to take them out of their experience of sadness and grief. Now I just listen. When they have cried all they need to cry, they find me there with them.

This simple thing has not been that easy to learn. It certainly went against everything I had been taught since I was very young. I thought people listened only because they were too timid to speak or did not know the answer. A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well intentioned words.



What is Active Listening?

The goal of “active listening” is to allow the Speaker to freely express feelings and to assist the Speaker to express hidden feelings and emotions. It can be used in any interaction – with clients, family members, or your own friends and family.

Communication takes place at a variety of levels.

- Content Level – the subject matter being discussed.
- Relationship Level – what the Listener communicates to the client about how much she is valued and accepted. The Relationship level operates primarily on the way the Listener feels: valued, accepted, comfortable. If there is mutual respect and trust at a Relationship Level, it is possible to agree or disagree with each other with equal comfort. But, if the mutual respect and trust do not exist, then every Content Level issue also can become a test of the relationship.

Active Listening involves acceptance of the Listener’s feelings.

When people express feelings and feel they are not accepted, they tend to push harder as if to prove that their feelings are justified, or to prove to themselves that it is really all right to feel the way they do. On the other hand, when feelings are accepted, people feel less pressured and less defensive. In addition, once expressed, other, deeper feelings can flow in behind.

Acceptance is different from agreement.

You express acceptance when you say, “I understand that you feel such-and-such a way about this topic.” You express agreement when you say, “You couldn’t be more right. I feel that way too.” In the first you accept that the other person feels the way she does, but in agreement, you ally yourself with the other person. One way we run into problems with feelings is to assume that if someone has a different feeling from ours, one of us must be right and one of us must be wrong. But another way of looking at it is to consider that when two people react differently to the same situation, they are reacting within the rules of their own upbringing, training, experiences and values. In ordinary conversations, we often have a tendency to try to reject the other person’s feelings and to prove that ours are correct. This accomplishes nothing. It is a fact that the Listener feels a certain way. The only appropriate behavior is to accept that he feels the way he feels. In Active Listening, the Listener acknowledges the other person’s feelings by repeating what she understood him to be feeling and thinking. The Listener summarizes, in her own words, the content and feeling of the client’s message and states this to the client to confirm understanding. She puts aside her own frame of reference and looks at the world from the client’s reference point.



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The benefit of Active Listening is that you, the Listener, have communicated acceptance of the client's feelings. In addition, it allows you to "check out" your understanding and allows him to correct you if you have misunderstood him. You may find that when you employ Active Listening people feel more comfortable talking to you about problems and sharing deeper feelings. You may also find that when you use Active Listening people are more able to talk through their feelings and solve their own problems.

Two examples to show the differences mentioned above:

One: (active listening)

Client: My daughter doesn't come to see me often enough!

Volunteer (Active Listener): It sounds like you feel like you would like to have her come more often. Is that so? I can see how you might feel very sad being separated from her.

Client: I know that she comes every time she feels that she can. She's a good girl trying to do a tough job and I love her. I do get lonely and sad...and sometimes I'm afraid of what's going to happen to me. I appreciate your visits too.

Two: (Not practicing Active Listening):

Client: My daughter doesn't come to see me often enough!

Volunteer: You know that she has a full time job and is a single parent. She comes as often as she can. You should feel grateful that she comes at all.

Client: After all, I'm going to leave her all my money. She owes it to me to visit as often as I want. Whose side are you on anyway?

Presenting Problems

Sometimes the individual who expresses strong feelings is considered to be "over-emotional" or "overly sensitive". But the feelings remain, so we learn to express feelings indirectly at first. Typically, unless the client trusts us and considers us a friend, feelings are known only by implication. If the client does not feel rejected, it can lead to sharing of more basic and deeply experienced problems.

Ineffective Listening

The basis for much ineffective listening is two-fold:

- Failure to distinguish those times when the client is not expecting you to do anything except understand;
- Failure to listen long enough or with sufficient understanding of the client's feelings to understand what the real problem is.

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Here are twelve typical ways that many people respond in a *listening situation* that communicate to the client that it's not acceptable for him to have feelings:

1. Ordering, Demanding: "You must try . . .", "You have to stop . . ." (Don't have that feeling; have some other feeling.)
2. Warning, Threatening: "You had better . . .", "If you don't then . . ." (You'd better not have that feeling.)
3. Admonishing, Moralizing: "You should . . .", "It's not nice to . . ." (You're bad if you have that feeling.)
4. Persuading, Arguing, Lecturing: "Do you realize . . .?", "The facts are . . ." (Here are some facts so you won't have that feeling.)
5. Advising, Giving Answers: "Why don't you . . .?", "Let me suggest . . ." (Here's a solution so you won't have that feeling.)
6. Criticizing, Blaming, Disagreeing: "You aren't thinking about this properly." (You're wrong if you have that feeling.)
7. Praising, Agreeing: "But you've done such a good job. . .", "I approve of . . ." (You need my approval to have that feeling.)
8. Reassuring, Sympathizing: "Don't worry . . .", "You'll feel better . . ." (You don't need to have that feeling.)
9. Interpreting, Diagnosing: "What you need is . . .", "Your problem is . . ." (You can fix having that feeling.)
10. Probing, Questioning: "Why . . .?", "Who . . .?", "What . . .?" "When . . .?" (Prove to me that you should have that feeling.)
11. Diverting, Avoiding: "We can discuss it later . . .", "That reminds me of . . ." (Your feeling isn't worthy of discussion.)
12. Kidding, Using Sarcasm: "When did you read a newspaper last?" "My old Aunt Mary had the same . . ." (You're silly if you persist in that feeling.)

When the client perceives that he is getting one of these messages, there is a risk that he will become defensive and justify the feeling further or close off entirely.

Using Active Listening

The Listener can use Active Listening techniques to consciously avoid the responses above, put aside his own feelings and agendas, and look at the world from client's reference point.

The Listener can listen passively and nod her head, say "Uhum" and "I see". The client knows that she is there and is not interrupting. The client may wonder, though, whether the Listener really hears what is said, and the Listener may wonder at times whether she really knows what the client means.

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In order to make sure that the client understands the Listener, and to let the client know what she understands, the Listener can restate what she thought she heard the client say. This is the basic Active Listening technique.

When the Listener feeds back to the client what the client has said and restates it, it is important to do this in a tone that indicates that the Listener accepts what is said as being true for the client. If the Listener rephrases the statements in a challenging way, she most likely will cause the client to be defensive and stop the flow of thinking.

Learning Active Listening

In the beginning when you try to “Active Listen” you may want to use some helpful phrases to preface your feedback, such as: “Let me see if I got you straight . . .”; or “I hear you say . . .”; or “As far as you are concerned . . .”; or “You seem to feel . . .”

Later on you can try to catch the essence of what is said and fit your feedback in a way that minimally disrupts the flow of the person you are listening to, such as: “That upsets you”, “She should not have done that to you”, “You want to do something different”.

Feedback is always tentative. It is asking “Is this the way you feel?” rather than telling, “This is the way you feel!” If you are unsure you can ask, “Is that right?” or “Does that fit for you?” If your feedback is not accepted by the person you listen to, do not put energy into proving that you were right or explaining why you thought that this is what he meant, even if you think you are right. Instead, ask what he does mean.

In Active Listening, it is most important for the Listener to find out what the Speaker’s flow is and to try to follow that to where ever it leads, rather than trying to direct the Speaker according to the Listener’s personal agenda. This is often difficult because we may have the feeling that if we are going to “help” someone we are supposed to know where we are going.

Active Listening is a valuable tool that you use whenever it seems appropriate. Keep in mind, however, that Active Listening is not all there is to communicating. If all you ever did in a conversation with someone was repeat back what he said to you, it would probably drive him crazy! Active Listening is a great place to start, especially as it shows us that there is more to being a good listener than just not talking. Later it can be combined with other types of communication in order for you to be an effective Listener.



Nonverbal Communication

Definition

1. includes all nonverbal stimuli in a communicative setting generated by an individual and the individual's use of environment.
2. includes intentional and unintentional nonverbal messages.

Functions

- 1. **REPEATS** what was said verbally
- 2. **COMPLEMENTS** what was said verbally
- 3. **CONTRADICTS** what was said verbally
- 4. **SUBSTITUTES** for what would be said verbally
- 5. **REGULATES** and **MANAGES** the communication event

Some Cautions

- 1. Over generalizing about the nonverbal behavior of a culture leads to the assumption that everybody in the culture behaves in the same way.
- 2. Not all nonverbal behaviors are carried out on a day-to-day basis. Many actions are done infrequently and should not be used alone to characterize the culture.
- 3. Nonverbal behaviors do not occur in isolation but rather within a complex communication process.
- 4. Like culture, nonverbal behavior is learned, passed on from generation to generation, and involves shared understanding.

Types of nonverbal communication

1. General Appearance and Dress: We make judgments about people based on how attractive we think they are. But standards and judgments regarding attractiveness are subject to cultural variations. Clothing and skin color can also influence how we perceive and communicate with others.

2. Facial Expressions: People are more likely to interpret facial expressions accurately if they interpret them within the entire communication context. Although facial expressions can be very individualistic and may not convey cultural meanings, the display and intensity of emotion is very culturally based. Some facial expressions are thought to be universal (smiling=joy, happy).

3. Eye contact and gaze: Our interpersonal relationships are affected by how we use our eyes. Culture modifies how much eye contact we may engage in and with whom. Allow for both direct eye contact and for the gaze to focus elsewhere.



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4. Touch: The meaning inferred from touch is influenced by such factors as the mood or state we are in, relationship with the toucher, past history, duration of the touch, location of the touch, whether the touch is active or passive. The duration, frequency and location of touch are largely culturally based.

5. Space and Distance (proxemics): Responses to violations of personal space are based on individual and cultural factors. Space between couples and space between individuals in public settings vary culturally. Be aware of sitting too close or too far from the client.

6. Time: Cultures use and see time in very different ways. How a culture views and uses the past, present, and future gives insight into how its people communicate. Pay attention to scheduling appointments, being on time, and giving a time framework for your visit.

7. Silence: Silence sends nonverbal cues during a communication situation. Meaning assigned to silence is contingent on such factors as duration, appropriateness, preceding behavior or activity, and relationship between participants. Like other nonverbal behaviors, our use of and reaction to silence is culturally determined.

Promoting Positive Communication

- Limit self discussion
- Encourage client expression of emotion
- Avoid comforting clichés
- Avoid overly sympathetic responses
- Refrain from punitive statements
- Avoid lecturing or blaming

Remember:

It is not necessary to have all the answers; your gift is in your ability to hear the questions.