

Resource 7: Listening

(Extracted from The Power of Social Intelligence by Tony Buzan, pp 31 and 34.)

Listening – a neglected art

It is estimated that we spend between 50 and 80 percent of our waking life communicating. On average half of that communication time is spent in listening. In schools and colleges the percentage is even higher, and in the business world listening ranks as one of the top three most important necessary managerial skills. Amazingly, despite all this, listening is the 'poor relation' of communication skills when it comes to being taught, despite the fact that it is learned first and used most, as the table below shows.

Learned	Used	Taught
Listening 1st	Most (45%)	Least
Speaking 2nd	Next most (35%)	Next least
Reading 3rd	Next least (16%)	Next most
Writing 4th	Least (9%)	Most

Bad listening habits

There are 10 listening habits that are most damaging to your skill as a listener and most weakening of your Social Intelligence.

1. Pretending to pay attention when you are really not.
2. Trying to do other things while listening.
3. Deciding the subject is uninteresting.
4. Getting distracted by the speaker's way of speech or other mannerisms.
5. Getting over-involved and thus losing the main thread of the person's arguments or thoughts.
6. Letting emotion-filled words arouse personal anger and antagonism.
7. Concentrating on any distractions instead of what is being said.
8. Taking linear, one colour notes.
9. Listening primarily for facts.
10. Avoiding anything that is complex or difficult.

Cont...

Active listening

Listening is *not* a passive activity; it's not the 'unexciting' or 'unflamboyant' part of a conversation... Nor is it just a person's words that we should listen to. If we are aware of the other person's body language as well we can intuit so much more meaning from any conversation – we can listen to what they *feel* as well as what they say.

There is a humorous phrase that is particularly apt here: 'I know that you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!'

By listening to the person's whole body, we will in fact 'hear' what he or she meant!