

active listening: the 12 blocks to listening



There are 12 blocks to listening. You will find your favourite among them. This is NOT a good or bad thing. Blocks simply get in the way of effective listening.

1

comparing

‘mine is better, worse, the same as yours. if they did it my way...!
boy if they think that is tough, let me tell you how tough it can be.’

It is hard to listen to their experience if you are constantly comparing, and it stops compassion.

2

mind reading

‘they probably think i’m dumb –
they don’t really want to talk to me.’

Constantly drawing conclusions based on vague misgivings, hunches or projections. We are more concerned about OUR feelings than they are!

3

rehearsing

‘Looking’ interested while you are busy rehearsing your responses to their words. You have a point to make, a story to tell, or an objection to interject. You spend your time ready to rebut, defend or manoeuvre your ideas.

4

filtering

The aim here is to avoid problems. If you are afraid of anger you will pay attention to ‘angry’ signs – perceiving none, your mind wanders. You listen enough to see if a particular problem is coming and if not, fog out.

5
judging

Almost everybody's favourite. Quick judgements based on our own prejudice or opinion allow us to write off someone as stupid, uninformed etc. Judgement is best done after knowing background.

6
dreaming

'i just got back from San Francisco and...'

Their words trigger your own private thoughts and associations and your mind wanders. You are thinking about something their words remind you of, and when you 'return' they are talking about something else.

7
identifying

Everything they say triggers your memory of experiences about a similar incident and, unrestrained, you launch happily into your own story about you!

8
advising

Another all-time favourite. While you're giving great advice on something, you are missing their pain or joy, haven't acknowledged their situation. You haven't 'been there.' They are alone in their pain or joy.

9
sparring

'are you still doing that? you don't know what you're talking about!'

Often starts with looking for things with which to be disagreeable, and continues with put-downs and discounts. It often ends badly.

10
being right

Low self-esteem means you have trouble with criticism or corrections so you go to great lengths in order to be 'right.' You may override others with a loud voice, insults, twisting facts, rigidity and other tactics.

11
derailing

Two fast ways to derail somebody: 1) An abrupt subject change when you get uncomfortable or bored, and 2) joke it off – nothing is serious.

12
placating

'of course! terrific! incredible!'

You want to be liked at almost any price, and so agree with everything they say, or agree to speed up the conversation because you are bored.

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