

# Let's Talk: Listening and communication

***Presenter – Lynn Borteck, Clinical Counselor***

Hi, I'm Lynn. Let's talk about listening and communication. Lots of us think that good communication means speaking clearly and making ourselves heard but sometimes we forget that it's really important to listen too. Listening is more than just a courtesy; it's the other half of communicating. Let's take a look at a few examples.

## Example 1: Poor listening skills

Lynn: Hi Allison, how are you today?

Allison: Hi, good. How are you doing?

Lynn: I'm doing really good, what's going on?

Allison: Good, oh you know, just been working and planning my wedding and we picked out the venue and it's gonna be so pretty. I also picked out my dress.

\*Digital beep sound\*

Lynn: Oh, hold on one second. I'm getting a message. Hold on one second. Just have to text back. Okay, sorry. I'm sorry, what were you saying?

Allison: Oh, I was just telling you about our colors and we picked out navy for the base color and gold and white, gonna be all white flowers and we have garden roses and it's gonna be so pretty and I can't wait.

Lynn: Wow, I guess that sounds really good. I mean, I didn't do anything like that.

Allison: Oh, well what did you do?

## Identify areas for improvement

So let's talk about what happened in that example. It's pretty obvious that I wasn't a good listener. But what did I do? I was very distracted. I checked my watch. I actually took a text and laughed at it, interrupting Allison, who was speaking to me, and then I even judged her. I even called her out on her choice of colors and started to tell her what I thought she should do. I wasn't being a good

listener at all. I was interjecting myself all over the place and I was distracted. So now let's take a look at an example of good listening skills.

## Example 2: Good listening skills

Lynn: Hi Allison, how are you today?

Allison: Hi, good. How are you doing?

Lynn: Good, what've you been up to?

Allison: Oh, just the same. Just working and planning my wedding. It's getting close. We picked out the venue, it's gonna be out in the country. We picked out the colors.

\*Cell phone rings\*

Lynn: Ooh, I'm sorry.

Allison: That's okay.

Lynn: I'm turning that off, I'm sorry. Yeah?

Allison: And we picked out our colors, they're navy, white and gold, and then I also picked out my dress and it comes in next month, so I'm getting really excited about that.

Lynn: Wow, so you've done a lot. You've got your venue, you've got your colors and tell me more about your dress.

Allison: Oh, it's...

## Focus and understanding

So now let's talk about that example. I was really able to focus when Allison was talking. Yeah my phone did ring but I turned it off right away and I even apologized to Allison. I faced her. I was making eye contact the whole time and I think my whole body language was saying, "I'm listening, I'm paying attention." I wasn't trying to think of something to say back to her. I was really listening to what she had to say. At the end, I even summarized what I had heard and I asked a question about something that she had said.

## Listening in your day-to-day

So now we have examples of what happens when you don't listen so well, and when you do listen well. When you do listen well, you're showing the other person that you respect them. You're not judging them. You're not interrupting them. You're not telling them what you would do in their situation. You're also proving to them that you deserve a turn to be listened to. In addition, when you really listen, you get new ideas and you get clarity.

You avoid misunderstandings because if you're really listening and tuning in, you're really clarifying and you can do that further when you repeat at the end, what you've heard. Also it leads to better relationships because, let's face it, the speaker feels better about themselves and about you when you're really listening.

## Listen to learn

So I want to leave you with a really good quote from somebody who was a wonderful interviewer and listener, Larry King. He said, "I remind myself every morning, nothing I say today is going to teach me anything. If I'm going to learn, I have to listen."

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