Leadership Using Active Listening
Literacy Action Network
August 15, 2013
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How did I learn about listening?

My mother

Professional Acting ("The Method")

Counseling (M.A. Lesley University, Cambridge, Mass.)

Advocate/Lobbyist/Organizer

Different organizations, different kinds of listening

Running for City Council

Running for Mayor
Listening to Self

What do we mean by active listening?

Active listening is:
• The conscious effort to hear
• The creation of a respectful space
• The placing of full attention on the speaker
• The communication of active availability
• The reflecting back of what is said
• The withholding of judgment and rebuttals (at least while the speaker is talking)
• The understanding (or at least the effort to understand) not just what is said, but what is meant

What are the leadership benefits of being a good listener?

Why should leaders listen?
• It’s expected!
• It creates safety.
• It shows respect.
• It honors and develops your team’s capacities.
• It encourages honest communication.
• It exposes you to more ideas.
• It demonstrates your confidence in your team.

Creates Safety

What’s one of the easiest ways to be perceived as an active listener?

• Reflecting back what’s said.
  --Using exact words
  --Or paraphrasing

What’s the best way to handle that?

Great question to ask (especially if you want to develop leadership capability)
Questions for attendees!

• Where have you been a good listener in your life and how has it benefited you?
• Where have you NOT been a good listener in your life and how did it detract from your goals?

Exercise!

• Find a partner.
• Partner A describes a situation where they use or didn’t use good active listening skills.
• Partner B reflects back what they hear using exact words or paraphrasing (no comments or advice).
• Switch roles.

Pitfalls of Not Listening

• Poor inaccurate decision-making
• Decisions unsupported by employees
• Disengaged employees
• High staff turnover
• Less innovation, creativity
• Poor customer loyalty

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

What are these toxic attitudes?

Criticism
Contempt
Defensiveness
Stonewalling

Remedies

How can I listen more effectively as a leader?

• Space, silence and Self
• Attention: Place full attention on the other person
• Freedom from fear
• Engage with energy and esteem
• Trust: Trust each person is doing their best to communicate.
• You: It’s not about you but about your willingness to lead through listening.

We have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.

Epictetus, Greek philosopher

How can you stay in touch?

• Give me your business card to be added to my short, weekly email newsletter or email me: elizabeth@pursueyourpath.com
• LinkIn with me: elizabethadickinson
• Write an “S” on your business card for a complimentary one hour strategy session by phone at my home office in St. Paul.
• My focus: leadership, life-work balance, stress, career transitions, living authentically (according to your own values)