

Actively Listen to Understand

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.” Stephen R. Covey

Think: Active listening allows the speaker to feel valued and their message to be understood.

Do: Allow the speaker to fully verbalize their message without interruptions. Allow a few seconds to lapse before speaking to clarify or respond.

Ginny Angert

<http://kcards.ning.com/forum/topics/establish-likeable-presence?id=6349855%3ATopic%3A33&page=13#comments>

This particular card is near and dear to me as for years I've needed to focus on being an "active listener". My career path has helped me to improve this skill but not to the level that I need. I am a solutions specialist which ultimately means, I present to C level executives, physicians and their staff on the use of our software. So what does this really mean? Well it means that I need to be an active listener and for the most part, I am.....at work, sometimes. I've discovered since taking on this position that because I am a part of sales operations and we deal with fast-moving, fast-talking individuals in an ever-changing environment, it has in some cases given me a *pass*

to talk fast and “listen” fast and even talk over people, although not with malicious intent, but still, not good.

Unfortunately, this carries over into my personal life and in my interactions with my teammates and my manager as well. This card gave me plenty of opportunities to play it both at home and work which I've described below.

I used my computer to download the card and put it on my desktop.

1st Play

My 1st play was at work. I was on the phone with one of my teammates and as we started to discuss a project we were working on, I heard a voice tell me to play the card, (I guess downloading it on my computer wasn't enough as I didn't have it open and in front of me so that I would see it).

As the conversation progressed, I found myself *struggling* to keep my mouth closed and continuously interrupted my teammate (who didn't seem annoyed, since this is how we typically communicated)

and I didn't allow her once to finish her sentence before I started mine. EPIC FAIL 😞.

After my 1st play, I realized immediately I needed to try to tweak the card to make it more effective for me, I would do this the next time I played the card.

2nd Play

My 2nd play of this card was the next day and again during work. I felt I did much better this time because I made myself aware of the card (visually) and reminded myself of how poorly my 1st play went.

I logged onto my computer in the morning, and opened the card on my desktop this time so that I would see it throughout the day as I worked. This play was much more interesting because the individual I used it for is a sales rep whom I enjoy working with immensely because we communicate very well (or at least we think so). Our

exchange is usually very quick, fast, with thoughts and ideas being smacked around like a tennis ball but we are clear, productive and we talk over each other, apologize for it but continue to do it throughout the entire conversation. Somehow, we get it done!

When I played this card with her, I suppressed the strong desire I had to interrupt her; instead I managed to miraculously....pause, breathe and wait. I paused only for approximately 5 seconds but it felt like 5 minutes! It must have felt like 5 minutes to her as well because after I allowed her to complete her thought and her sentence, her next words to me were “Mel”? She must have been wondering, ironically,

if I were fully engaged or listening. I must admit that I only did this technique a few times before I broke my silence and told her what I was practicing. She chuckled, but didn't miss a beat and forged ahead with the next topic. It felt great to have a successful play and so early in the game! Well it didn't last long because foolishly I thought I'd master this skill until I tried to play it at home...

3rd Play

My toughest challenge would be to play this card on my fiancé. I had already prepped myself for the road that lies ahead. When he and I

communicate, I feel at times that maybe he has ADD or maybe I do and so I always find myself speaking quickly to get in what I want to say before he is done speaking so that I don't forget what I want to say. You can imagine that this doesn't go over as well at home as it does at work.

So here I go...ready, set, play! He spoke, I tried to listen and allow him to speak but I interrupted.

Again, he spoke, I tried to listen and allow him to speak, but again, I interrupted.

Again, he spoke, I listened and ALLOWED him to speak without interruption but I don't think it went over as I hoped it would and he would notice that this was a big deal. Instead I think he probably just thought I was distracted and thinking of something else, when I was actually engaged.

So, short story is I played the card on half of the conversation as I found myself slipping easily back into my comfort zone of "inactively listening".

I have much work to do in this area and know that I can do this because I have observed that when communicating with clients, I actively listen. This should not change when communicating with co-workers or family.

In light of my understanding of the factors of transformational leadership, I've authored a new card for active listening.

Actively Listening Shows Consideration

"The best time to hold your tongue is the time you feel you must say something or bust."— Josh Billings

Think: Active listening shows “individualized consideration” and allows the speaker to feel valued and worthy.

Do: Allow the speaker to fully verbalize their message without interruptions. Repeat back to the speaker when necessary to show your understanding.

Card Author: Melody Dungee

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS WHEN PLAYING THE CARD

1. If playing from your mobile device or computer, set reminders through Outlook or other methods for reinforcement to play the card.
2. Minimize internal and external distractions
3. Engage yourself

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