

# How to Listen

Tags: [#listening](#)

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## Dialogue

Orchestra tuning

Hearing vs. listening

Example of a call center...

Assumption: If I'm asking questions, I'm listening.

Many people think listening is about questioning. When your mind is absent or wandering, these questions appear random to the speaker rather than expanding the conversation. Aimless and arbitrary questions waste the speaker's time and diminish the relationship.

My experience -- what did they just say?

Outcome vs. the tactics

Paying attention vs. giving attention

Our attention shows up best for those we are closest to:

Whether you have a life-long relationship or are meeting someone for the first time, you will bring a different type of attention to the preparation and the conversation. As many commented in the Deep Listening Research, the longer the relationship, the less conscious they are of their attention in the moment. The more likely you will use assumptions and mental short-cuts to anticipate, jump ahead, or interrupt the speaker.

It's OK to interrupt.

Listening is not extended silence. You may choose to avoid interruptions to be polite. But sometimes you need to elegantly, professionally, and skillfully interrupt. Interruptions are helpful when they clarify common understanding. The speaker will forgive and embrace an interruption when the intention is to understand more of the topic and the circumstances surrounding it. It signals to the speaker that you are

listening and seeking to enhance the broader implications of their backstory.

Being curious vs. drawing conclusions.

...in regards to paraphrasing.

Effective paraphrasing advances the understanding of the speaker and the listener.

What have you changed your mind on?

## Reserve

When your attention is in, you are fixated on yourself. You and your ego are waltzing entranced in a dance in your mind. Your ego is the neediest part of your mind. It seduces your attention and captures it for extended periods of time as you dance together safely and close, in a spell not to be broken by the reality of the outside world.

When your attention is out, it's still dancing skillfully together with your ego. Your waltz continues to be intimate and seductive, yet you notice that you are on a dance floor with another. They too are dancing with their egos. With your attention out, you can notice beyond yourself. You can see other ways to waltz and other opportunities to engage.

## References