



I Hear You.... But Am I Really Listening??*

To be fully present and listen to another person requires the following:

- **The listener is giving full attention to the speaker and is fully present.**

Tips: Stop what you are doing and focus on the speaker. Minimize any distractions in the environment. Make eye contact. Let the speaker know that you are ready to listen.

- **The listener puts aside any preconceived ideas of what the speaker is going to say.**

Tips: Take a deep breath and clear your mind of all assumptions. Tell yourself to slow down and just listen. There is no rush for you to respond. In fact, you can't listen and respond at the same time.

- **The listener interprets what is going on descriptively and not judgmentally.**

Tips: Use active listening skills by reflecting back what you heard the speaker say, then ask the speaker "Is that right?"

- **The listener is alert for any confusion and asks questions to get clarity.**

Tips: Closed questions are used to gather facts. They are typically answered with a yes or no answer or with simple facts. Open questions or declarative probes inquire about meaning and often result in fuller answers. For example: How did you feel about that? Tell me more about.... What do you mean by....? How would you solve the problem next time?

- **The listener lets the speaker know that the speaker has been heard and also the content of what was communicated.**

Tips: Summary statements are useful. The listener uses his or her own words to summarize what has been said so far in the conversation and after doing so, checks with the speaker by asking "Does that sound right?" or "Am I understanding you correctly?"

* From The New People Making by Virginia Satir. Adapted by John Downes, MC.