

12 Keys to Effective Listening

1. Be calm – the calmer you are, the more attentively you will listen and the more you will encourage the other person to talk openly
2. Adopt a posture that indicates to the other person that you are listening and which will stimulate you to feel in listening mode
3. Slowly tune out the rest of the world to focus on the other person. (If you start by expanding your awareness, it is often easier to focus in)
4. Suspend judgement – take an attitude of listening to understand rather than assess. Try to avoid drawing conclusions either about the person or the issue
5. Listen with your eyes and intuition as well as your ears: look for dissonance between what is said and what other senses tell you
6. Listen to the emotion and mood of what is said, as well as the content
7. Let go of the need to speak and to make your own points, until you have listened to all there is
8. Listen for what is not said
9. Listen for patterns and themes – in the words people use, the images they evoke, the emotions they reveal
10. Do not feel obliged to keep asking questions: less is more
11. Allow space for silence; don't feel obliged to fill the space
12. Don't take notes – you can't attend fully if you do. If you need to take notes, take short breaks in the conversation, where you can both jot down points to remember