

ATTENTIVE LISTENING

Have you ever been accused of not listening? Or perhaps your thoughts wander off when someone is talking to you. Ask yourself are you really a good listener?

What makes a good listener? The word 'listen' is an anagram for 'silent'.

A good listener is someone that takes time to stop, pay attention, quiet their inner voice and really hear what is being said to them.

So how can you better improve your listening skills?

Here are some things to consider:

Have you really heard what has been said, or are you just able to repeat it? As life is busy and we are all trying to multitask someone can be talking and whilst we think we are listening we really haven't heard what they are saying. For example, driving to school with my daughter, I'm thinking of things I have to do for the day, concentrating on the traffic and my daughter is talking to me. She says, 'Mum did you hear what I said?' I respond, 'Yes, I did'.

But to be really honest, although I can repeat every word she said, there is a difference between repeating it word for word and really hearing what she was saying and how she feels.

Quietenning the inner voice doesn't always comes naturally (some people are better at it than others) and it's something that needs to be practiced.

What do I mean by quietening the inner voice?

Quietenning the inner voice is when you take any distractions you have, whether they are **external** such as the T.V or **internal** such as unspoken thoughts, i.e. "what am I going to say next". You can't listen when you are busy thinking, good listeners aren't thinking of what they are going to say next.

When engaging in a serious conversation with someone, make a decision to place importance in what they have to say this tells them that you value them and how they feel. Think about your body language, your eye contact and your

facial expressions. You can't fool people into thinking that you are listening when you're not.

Think about the environment you are in.

Are there are any distractions?

Is it too noisy?

Good listening is not continuous silence otherwise after a while to person may doubt you are even listening. If you feel the need to say something, ask if they want you opinion before you give it and if they don't then that's ok. Some people feel they are not helping if they don't give advice, however, sometimes people just want to express and be heard, not have someone 'fix it' for them.

At first these things can seem quite daunting and overwhelming. However, don't think that you have to do all of this at once in the beginning. Choose an area that you want to work on and practice that for at least a week. As time goes on, you will become more confident and then you introduce another one. Be patient attentive listening takes time.