

Active Listening Skills & Barriers

Barriers to Listening

- forming a judgment or evaluation before we understand what is being said
- making unjustified inferences about the meaning of what is being said
- attributing our own thoughts and ideas to the speaker causing distortion
- being inattentive
- having a closed mind
- hearing what we wish to hear
- fear of being changed ourselves
- excessive and incessant talking

So what are the keys to effective listening. The following list highlights some of the keys:

Stop talking- listen openly and with empathy to the other person

- Try not to be defensive
- Look at the person; be patient
- Ask the other person for as much detail as he/she can provide; paraphrase what the other is saying to make sure you understand it and check for understanding
- Respond in an interested way that shows you understand the problem and the employee's concern
 - attend to non-verbal cues, body language, not just words; pay attention to both emotional and cognitive messages (eg. anger)
 - stay in an active body state to aid listening; fight distractions; use eye contact, encouraging gestures
- Ask the other for his views or suggestions
- maintain the self confidence and self-esteem of the other person
- lead by example
- (at work) take notes; decide on a specific follow-up action and date