

Balanced Living

August 2024



How to Be a Good Listener

To be a great communicator, it is important that you focus on developing your listening skills. These skills will help you connect with family, friends, and coworkers; in turn, important people in your life will feel that their words are respected and appreciated and therefore will be more comfortable opening up to you.

Being a good listener is an interactive and engaging process. It includes asking questions, paying attention to the speaker, considering how the speaker feels, being patient during the conversation, and responding without judgment. If you feel that you need to improve in any of these areas, don't worry; you're not alone! The following tips and techniques will help you learn new listening skills and become a good listener.

Stay Attentive and Responsive

Listen in your own style, but let the speaker know that you're hearing them. You can respond with a "yes", "I see", "go on", or other words that show you are listening. By actively responding to the speaker, you can keep yourself alert and attentive, instead of risking losing focus. By concentrating on the conversation, you may even learn something new about an idea or about the person, gain more understanding about a subject, and experience greater closeness with the individual.

Think About What's Being Said

Though it may be hard to listen at times, especially when you're exhausted or uninterested, try to stay alert to what the person is saying by thinking about the following items:

- Why is the person telling me this?
- Is there something expected of me?
- Is this information accurate?
- Am I getting all the information, or is there something missing?
- Do I need more clarification on a certain point?
- Is there something new that I am listening to?

If you're too tired or distracted to talk, see if you can schedule important talks during time periods when you will be better able to focus.

Ten Tips to Better Listening

If someone becomes angry with you, try to limit conversation until the situation calms down. When it does, ask the person questions and show your concern; try inquiring about what you can do to help or what the person thinks would make the situation better. Don't draw judgment of the angry person. Instead, draw facts rather than opinions. Think about why the person is angry and what factors caused the anger to arise. See if there is anything you can do to alleviate the situation. Sometimes you will have to say "no" to difficult and angry types. When saying no:

Use these ten tips to improve your listening skills:

1. Take time to talk or schedule time to talk.
2. Speak in a quiet place with minimal distractions, when possible.

3. Make eye contact with the speaker.
4. Give responses to show that you're listening, like nodding or saying "uh-huh."
5. Ask questions, but don't interrupt.
6. Be patient with the speaker.
7. Don't judge what the speaker is saying. Keep an open mind.
8. Check for word emphasis, sound level of speech, or speed of speech to tell you how the speaker is feeling.
9. Repeat back what you heard. Ask the speaker if you missed anything.
10. Ask the speaker about his or her feelings. Give the best guidance you can.

Keep in mind that if the person talking to you is upset, you may want to avoid asking questions. This may make him more upset, so it may be best just to console the speaker.

Leading by Example Helps Others Learn

If you demonstrate good listening skills, others may follow suit. For instance, children who are surrounded by adults with solid communication abilities are more likely to have solid communication abilities themselves. And your communication skills may not only inspire children, they can also inspire coworkers, family members, and other adults in your life.

Written by Life Advantages - Author Dr. Delvina Miremadi ©2024

Keys to Effective Communication

In order to connect with people and help them understand where you're coming from, you have to do more than just state your point. Communication is complex and often learning how to communicate effectively requires practice and skill. Fortunately, there are specific things that you can do to build your communication tool box; follow the suggestions below to learn some of the key techniques.

Create an Atmosphere of Trust

- When speaking in a group, show others that you are a good communicator. Listen openly to each person; this will show people that you won't embarrass them or twist their words.
- Try to avoid judgment or unnecessary criticism. If you do have to provide criticism, make it constructive.
- Give praise and positive feedback.

Get Your Thoughts Together

- Do research beforehand. Create notes, know the pros and cons of what you are presenting, and do your homework on the subject.
- If necessary, use visual tools or documents that can help your audience understand.
- Be specific, accurate, and honest about the subject.

Adjust to Your Audience

- Consider what the other person already knows.
- If you reach a point where communicating becomes difficult, try to keep communication lines open so everyone can come to a level of understanding.
- Try not to use jargon or terms that are too technical; only use language that your listeners can understand.
- Pick an appropriate place to talk. If the subject is personal, pick a private place.

Invite Feedback

- Ask your listener what he thinks of a subject, how he just interpreted what was said, and how he feels about the issue. Invite feedback, constructive criticism, and ask about the pros and the cons of the idea at stake.

Use Appropriate Tones of Voice and Body Language

- Adjust tone and body language as needed, as these two things can actually influence what the listener hears.
- Note if you sound urgent, hesitant, angry, pleased, calm, or belligerent. Only use tones that are appropriate.
- Check your body language. If you are avoiding eye contact, crossing your arms, fidgeting, or leaning in too close to the listener, you may not be sending an effective message.

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Time Management Techniques to Make the Most of Your Weekly

For some students, time management just seems to come naturally. For others, it takes a concentrated effort. Whichever category you fall into, most students have some room to improve their time management skills to become more productive in everyday life. College is an ideal time to hone these skills due to the wide range of responsibilities that must be managed to succeed. Here are some tips to help you effectively manage your time as a busy college student.

Plan ahead and prioritize.

One of the best ways to efficiently manage your time is to plan ahead and prioritize your schedule. You can keep a weekly to-do list, use a physical planner, download a scheduling app on your phone, or update an online calendar. Choose whatever tool works best for you to stay organized. Writing everything down helps ensure you don't forget anything. Be realistic about how long an item on your to-do list will take and what you have time for in order to make decisions about priority. It might be helpful to have one list for all school-related tasks and another for other responsibilities or to use highlighters to categorize tasks by color.

Prioritizing schoolwork.

For school-related tasks, such as assignments, exams, and papers, rank them by when they are due and how much of your final grade they are worth. For example, spend more time studying for an exam worth 30% of your final grade over a homework assignment worth only 5%. Also, prioritize assignments that are due sooner than others.

Do a little each day.

It can be helpful to space tasks out and do a little at a time, especially when it comes to longer written assignments and exams. Otherwise, it can feel stressful and daunting to try and complete an assignment in one study session. Try reserving shorter blocks of time throughout the week to work on an assignment.

Manage distractions.

When you are focused on coursework or a task from your to-do list, minimize distractions so they don't detract from your productivity. Put your phone on silent and out of sight and find a place to work where you won't be interrupted. If your roommates or family members are around, let them know ahead of time you will be studying and kindly ask them not to interrupt you. If background noises are bothersome, try putting headphones on and listening to classical music.

Finding balance with a busy lifestyle.

It can be difficult to balance school and all the other obligations in your life. Remember: There are only so many hours in a day, which means you can't do it all. It's okay to say no to something that isn't a priority that week. Some weeks you might not have as much time for leisure or social activities. However, it is important to balance your workload with helpful opportunities to de-stress and recharge. As you work through tasks on your to-do list, reward yourself with short breaks. It's important to get up, stretch, and give your eyes a break periodically. Also, try to incorporate exercise or some type of physical activity into your schedule most days of the week, which often helps with focus and productivity when performing other tasks.

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Webinar Now Available:

Did you Hear Me? Active Listening as a Key to Success

You know the feeling—someone is talking to you, and you're already formulating what you're going to say in response. Or perhaps you heard the words they said but not the deeper meaning behind them. Miscommunication can lead to all sorts of problems and is one of the biggest challenges in relationships. During this fun and fast-paced session, we'll provide you with some tweaks and tips for active listening that will help you to thrive at work and in your personal life.



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National Breastfeeding Month

National Breastfeeding Month is entering its 14th year as an observance this August. This year's theme, "Nourish, Sustain, Thrive," resonates deeply as it underscores the critical importance of protecting, promoting, and supporting lactation throughout the human life cycle.

WHY IS BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT CRUCIAL?

- **Health Benefits:** Breastfeeding provides essential nutrients and antibodies, promoting healthy growth and reducing the risk of infections for infants.
- **Maternal Health:** It lowers the risk of postpartum depression, breast and ovarian cancers, and contributes to faster postpartum recovery.
- **Economic Impact:** Breastfeeding reduces healthcare costs and fosters a more productive workforce by supporting parental bonding and workplace policies.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT THOSE IN THEIR BREASTFEEDING JOURNEY?

Individuals

- Offer emotional support and encouragement to breastfeeding parents.
- Respect their feeding choices and provide a non-judgmental environment.
- Assist with household chores or childcare to alleviate stress.
- Educate yourself about breastfeeding benefits to better understand their experience

Organizations

- Implement breastfeeding-friendly policies in the workplace, such as flexible schedules and private lactation rooms.
- Provide access to lactation consultants and breastfeeding education for employees.
- Advocate for breastfeeding-friendly healthcare practices and policies.

Policymakers

- Enact and enforce laws that protect the rights of breastfeeding parents, including workplace accommodations and extended parental leave.
- Allocate funding for breastfeeding support programs and research.
- Ensure healthcare providers receive training in lactation support.
- Promote breastfeeding education in schools and healthcare settings to raise awareness and understanding.

This event encourages us to celebrate the dedication of mothers and parents who choose to breastfeed while striving to create a supportive environment for all families. Together, we can protect, promote, and support breastfeeding, ensuring a healthier future for generations to come.

Source: <https://www.usbreastfeeding.org/national-breastfeeding-month.html>



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Understanding Attachment Styles

The concept of attachment styles, introduced by psychologist John Bowlby in the mid-20th century, is a fundamental tool for understanding our patterns in close relationships. It's rooted in our earliest interactions with caregivers and shapes how we think, feel, and behave in relationships as adults. Recognizing your attachment style can illuminate pathways to personal growth and healthier relationships.

Attachment styles are generally categorized into four types: secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. People with a secure attachment style usually have a positive view of themselves and their relationships. They find it easy to form close bonds and are resilient in the face of conflicts, enjoying healthy, independent relationships.

In contrast, individuals with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style often crave closeness and seek validation, accompanied by a fear of abandonment. Dismissive-avoidant individuals, on the other hand, tend to maintain emotional distance and value their independence, often avoiding closeness. Lastly, those with a fearful-avoidant attachment style experience a mix of desiring closeness and fearing potential hurt, leading to a complex dynamic in their relationships.

Understanding your attachment style is not about labeling yourself but gaining insights into your relational dynamics. It helps you understand your reactions in relationships, identify your anxieties, and recognize patterns where you might push people away or cling too tightly. This awareness is the first step towards meaningful change.

For example, recognizing an anxious attachment style might lead you to focus on self-soothing techniques and building self-esteem to feel more secure in your relationships. If you identify more with an avoidant style, you might challenge yourself to gradually open up and express vulnerability. In all cases, open communication and trying to understand others' perspectives can foster healthier interactions.

Exploring attachment styles opens the door to change. With self-awareness, patience, and sometimes professional guidance, you can evolve your attachment patterns to form deeper, more satisfying connections. Ultimately, knowing yourself better is the key to unlocking a world of healthier relationships and emotional well-being.

Source: <https://www.attachmentproject.com/blog/four-attachment-styles/>

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach.
Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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DIVE INTO SUMMER

Keeping Cool and Safe in the Water

As the temperatures rise, many of us seek relief in pools, lakes, and oceans to beat the heat. However, amidst the fun and relaxation, it's crucial to prioritize safety, especially when it comes to swimming. Understanding potential risks and taking preventive measures can ensure a safe and enjoyable summer aquatic experience.

For Adults: For adults, being aware of potential dangers and understanding how to respond is key to enjoying water activities safely:

- **Dry Drowning Awareness:** After leaving the water, watch for signs of dry drowning such as persistent coughing, difficulty breathing, or extreme fatigue.
- **Rip Currents and Riptides:** Be cautious of powerful currents in the ocean. If caught, swim parallel to the shore rather than fighting against the current.
- **Pool Safety:** Always swim in designated areas with a lifeguard present. If there is no lifeguard available, ensure someone knows your swimming plan. Safety means never swimming alone!

For Children: Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death for young children, so extra precautions are essential:

- **Learn to Swim:** Enroll children in swimming lessons early to teach them basic skills and safety habits.
- **Constant Supervision:** Don't assume that the more adults around, the better. Assign one designated adult to actively supervise children in and around water, maintaining eye contact and staying within arm's reach.
- **Pool Fences and Alarms:** Ensure pools are enclosed with proper barriers to prevent unsupervised access.
- **Dress in Bright Colors:** Avoid choosing water hued clothing. Instead, dress children in long sleeve rash guards in bright, neon colors, making them easy to see in case of an emergency.

General Tips for Everyone:

- **Know CPR:** Adults should learn CPR techniques, as prompt action can save lives in drowning incidents.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water, especially when swimming outdoors under the sun.
- **Check Weather Conditions:** Before heading to the beach, lake, or pool, check for any advisories or warnings.

By following these guidelines and staying informed, adults and children alike can safely enjoy their time in the water this summer. Remember, a few simple precautions can make all the difference between a fun day and a dangerous situation. Stay safe, stay cool, and enjoy your summer swim!



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Peanut Butter & Chocolate Chickpea Blondies

Ingredients

- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed dark brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup smooth natural peanut butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chickpea flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped salted peanuts
- 1 teaspoon flaky salt

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8-inch-square baking pan with parchment paper, letting some overhang the sides.
2. Reserve 2 tablespoons liquid from the chickpea can. Rinse chickpeas and pat dry. Combine the chickpeas and aquafaba in a food processor along with brown sugar, peanut butter, chickpea flour, vanilla and baking powder. Process until smooth. Add chocolate chips and peanuts; pulse a couple of times to mix. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread in an even layer. Sprinkle with salt.
3. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a few crumbs attached and the top is firm and starting to brown at the edges, about 40 minutes. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 30 minutes, then use the parchment as handles to transfer the blondies to a cutting board. Cut into 12 pieces.

Nutrition

Per Serving: 1 blondie

Calories: 206 | Protein: 6g | Carbohydrates: 25g | Dietary Fiber: 3g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Sugar: 17g | Sodium: 277mg | Added Sugars: 16mg

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/7952386/peanut-butter-chocolate-chickpea-blondies/>

Tips for Managing Fear of Job Loss

One national survey last January reported 84% of employees were worried about a layoff this year. Coping with the fear of job loss can be challenging, so find strategies for managing “layoff anxiety.” Consider the following to be better prepared, feel more in control, and prepare for possibly new future opportunities: 1) Continuously improve your skills. Don’t appear as though you’ve “plateaued.” 2) Share your fears and get advice from trusted persons who can provide emotional support. 3) Engage in stress management activities to relieve tension, experience positive distraction, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. 4) Build an emergency financial cushion and combine it with reducing unnecessary expenses. (The act of doing so relieves or lessens fear.) 5) Talk with your supervisor. Express your concerns. They may know little, but their view or perspective may spell relief. 6) Keep your work quality high. When layoff decisions come employees perceived as indispensable sometimes have more opportunities presented to them. Source: <https://www.hrtoday.com/news> (Search “84 percent worried”)

Stress Management Tip: Don’t Wait to Enrich Your Life

“I’d love to learn Italian...Volunteering at the children’s hospital would be so satisfying... Someday I will learn the piano...” Start now! Pursue satisfying activities you dream of rather than waiting for the perfect time someday. These enriching activities can give fulfillment and joy and directly enhance well-being, productivity, and help prevent burnout. When you are happier and more content, your productivity increases because a positive mindset fosters creativity, better problem-solving skills, and improved focus. This causes you to be more engaged on the job. Start, if needed, in the smallest way possible and bring balance to your busy life.

Intervene to Manage Financial Stress

Get help from your employee assistance program if you are under financial stress. You’ll start feeling relief with this first act of taking charge. The EAP will support your referral to the right source of help. Don’t wait. Download a budgeting tool to control income and expenses more effectively. Don’t juggle numbers in your head. Write it all down--income in column one, a list of anticipated payments in column two, and a record of what was actually spent in column three. Evaluate your budget daily. Seldom mentioned, be sure your personal intervention plan includes health and wellness activities to overcome ill effects from stress. Find hundreds of ways to save money by Googling “100 Ways to Save Money”. A ton of ideas will populate the page. Download: consumer.gov/sites/default/files/pdf-1020-make-budget-worksheet_form.pdf

Victim of Sexual Harassment, But Unsure about Next Steps?

Employees who are victims of sexual harassment often feel uncertain about how to seek help. Despite clear workplace policies, victims may feel confused about their situation. For instance, you might have experienced multiple incidents of harassment but downplayed their seriousness to “keep the peace,” leaving you feeling stuck and unable to act. You may fear retaliation despite assurances to the contrary or worry that your memory of events is unclear, which could undermine your complaint. Some victims hesitate to come forward, fearing their concerns will be dismissed by someone replying “that doesn’t sound so bad.” Reach out to the employee assistance program to gain clarity on your experiences, feel support, and learn about the next steps so you feel empowered to follow your organization’s relevant policy and get the help you need.

Mentally Prepare for a Better Day

Often, our mood or emotional state is dictated by what's happening around us at any given moment, and we react to each situation as it occurs. However, we have the power to make choices about how we feel and respond. Taking time before work and mentally preparing for the day is a perfect opportunity to practice this life skill. Doing so allows you to work as the real you with an unforced, positive frame of mind. How to do it: 1) Spend 15 minutes in mindful meditation to clear your mind and visualize positive expectations and outcomes for the day. 2) Use deep breathing exercises. Deep breathing exercises improve focus and concentration. This calms you and helps the visualized messages sink in and feel more certain. 3) Listen to motivational podcasts. Motivational podcasts (or tapes) shift your focus from negative thoughts to positive ones and they can excite you about possibilities that boost your mood. 4) Create your own playlist of uplifting songs. This works because upbeat songs release neurotransmitters like dopamine, which lift your mood. 5) Reflect on gratitude—what you are thankful for? This practice has numerous payoffs, but one that will show at work is your more optimistic perspective where challenges are seen instead as opportunities. (This is called having a “growth mindset.”) 6) Finally, don't let your day just simply happen. Be intentional. This means planning not just what you want to accomplish, but also how you would like to feel today, taking charge of your mood and what happens to it.

Small Habits with Big Benefits

There's power in performing small, routine behaviors that organize our lives and help maintain our mental health. Something as simple as making your bed each morning can be a component of preventive mental health practices. Surprisingly, however, only 38% of adults do it. Making your bed each morning sets a positive tone for the day. It gives you a quick win and the chance to experience some approving, positive self-talk. The task clears mental clutter and gives you a sense of order and control. And this can carry over to other tasks and goals in your life. Can you think of other habits that promote mental clarity, boost self-esteem, foster discipline, and reduce stress? Statistics: Sleepdoctor.com (Search “make your bed”)

Dealing with Difficult Personalities

A thousand books exist on “dealing with difficult people.” Nearly all elaborate on skills, labels, interventions, and coping strategies. But there is an overarching skill for having fewer problems with difficult personalities, and it is your ability to build a foundation of trust with coworkers. The vast majority of workplace problems relate to communication, and building a foundation of trust makes good communication thrive. Issues and problems are more quickly and more frequently addressed. There's increased transparency, a more positive workplace, reduced fear among workers, fewer suspicions, less wasted energy, and more valued constructive feedback. Check out the guide sheet on building a foundation of trust found at https://www.entrepreneur.com_ (Search “build trust infographic”)

Back to School: Preventing Bullying at School

Many parents worry about bullying in school. Early intervention and prevention are possible with proactive communication that encourages openness with the parent, but gentle probing might be needed because some children will resist sharing their victimization. Resistance stems from fear that the bully will retaliate, embarrassment or shame about being bullied, or fear that the parent might recommend some action that would add to the torment. Some might believe that the parent's help would be futile. And some children's desire for independence may drive them to remain silent and deal with the bullying on their own. Knowing these rationales for silence can help you be a more effective interviewer of your child so you can help prevent bullying victimization. Resource: www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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