

Twelve Steps of Deliberate Listening

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Adjust your mindset

Make a conscious decision to learn about the speaker from the speaker. The speaker is the expert on themselves, and they have much to tell you.

Ditch the distractions

Don't multitask. Close your laptop. Remove your headphones, even if they're turned off. And put your phone physically out of sight.

Suspend your right to be right

About whatever the speaker is saying so that you can hear what being right stops you from hearing.

Wait until the speaker has finished speaking before crafting your response

Otherwise, you'll miss the totality of what they're saying.

Mirror the speaker's last few words

Or mirror the gist of what the speaker has said, to let them know you're following their lead in this interaction.

Ask open-ended questions

Who, what, when, where, why, and how. You'll elicit broader responses than you would to questions with yes-or-no answers.

Acknowledge the speaker's emotion

It shows compassion, empathy, and your desire to understand them.

Notice the speaker's body language

But don't jump to conclusions about it. Stay curious!

Use your own body language to show you're paying attention

Eye contact, nodding, leaning forward, etc., show that you're present to what's being said.

Don't counter the speaker's story with one of your own

It will interrupt their momentum.

Let silence work its magic

Don't pressure yourself to jump in with a comment when the speaker pauses. The speaker will feel hurried along, instead of allowed to breathe.

Summarize for the speaker what you heard and ask if you got it right

Then listen to how they respond and thank them for the chance to connect.