

**THE MOST
MEMORABLE
PERSON IN
THE ROOM**

The most memorable and important person in the room is the one who is most interested in me! Sad. Crazy. Fact of life. That's just the way it is. Dumb folks rebel at that law and constantly strive in vain to show their superiority. Extremely memorable folks truly care about the person speaking, or at least let them feel so.

Life isn't a popularity contest or a constant ego trip...OK, cousin Jim and Rick aside. Life is a journey whereby each of us has the challenge of enjoying each moment to the fullest. The majority of that "fullness" comes from the best understanding of the journey. The majority of that understanding, (or misunderstanding), comes from listening, and the most memorable people are the ones who listen to me! (you)

The problem in understanding "listening" these days is that everyone has an opinion. Centuries ago Dante' concluded, "All is opinion." However, in all this bantering around of opinion and self proclaimed wisdom in communication little is said about the real problems in "listening."

Most everything written (or said, or whatever) about listening centers around "outside-of-me" ways that you can show the recipient that you are listening. If you care about anything worthwhile, you would care more about the south end of a northbound rat than showing! It's not how you are perceived, it is **WHAT YOU PERCEIVE THAT IS IMPORTANT!**

The three R's have always been education's staples, albeit highly expanded and specialized in today's modern world. But broken down it's still "Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic." Classes about Literature and language, and even Evelyn Woods, did a great job with reading. But I've not seen many classes in elementary school, or for that matter ANY school, that teaches the basics of LISTENING!

In today's world we are taught to speak and write in "sound bites." By default, our listening habits are accomplished in "listening bites," which strikes out in this game.

The average person reads 14% of their time and listens 30%, with some executives spending up to 90% of their time listening. The finest salesmen say that listening is the greatest reason for their success. But still there are no classes on "listening skills."

It's very possible that pointing out the ten (10) biggest problems in listening could help each of us listen better. I know that I catch myself falling into one or more of these categories all the time.

HERE ARE THE TOP TEN PROBLEMS IN LISTENING:

1. Calling the subject “uninteresting”. (There is no such thing as an uninteresting subject, only uninteresting people!) “Oh, I’ve heard that before. That’s boring....” and we zone out. Ask yourself, “I wonder what I can get out of this speaker this time around?” Be a sifter, a screener for new facts, waiting for a new idea. Listen intently to find that one idea that could make a difference in your life. We learn most by not viewing the same canvas a second time, but by viewing the canvas with a new set of eyes.
2. Criticizing the Speaker’s delivery. “Look at the way his tie is tied. His suit is wrinkled. Man, but he’s sloppy. He talks funny.” If the building were on fire and the same wrinkled, sloppy man jumped up and screamed “fire!” would we say, “Gee, look at that wrinkled suit”? **THE MESSAGE IS ALWAYS 10 TIMES MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE CLOTHING IN WHICH IT COMES DRESSED.**
3. Getting over stimulated at the speaker. You hear something that triggers something you want to say in retort, so you can’t wait for a break to give your two bits worth. In the meantime, you’ve missed all that was said. Sometimes we spend our time building a rebuttal, only to find that our statement was covered while we were tuned out! Snap judgements. **WITHHOLD EVALUATION UNTIL COMPREHENSION IS COMPLETE.**
4. Listening **ONLY** for **FACTS**. When we listen only for facts we miss a great deal of valuable input. Listen for ideas and central ideas, concepts. What are the principles that limit and control the facts?
5. Trying to make an outline out of the Speaker’s speech. Speakers seldom speak from outlines. The most frustrating thing to do is to try to outline the unoutlinable, principles, facts, theories, interrelationships.
6. Faking attention to the Speaker. We do the Speaker the overt courtesy to look at her, but in our minds we are doing calisthenics, math, thinking about what we’re going wear tonight, or whatever pops into our vacant minds. Don’t be a passive listener. Good listening is hard work. Be aggressive with it.
7. Tolerating distractions in the audience. “I can’t see him.” “I can’t hear him because of those people over there.” “That noisy air conditioning.” **PARDON ME FOR SPEAKING WHILE YOU WERE INTERRUPTING!**
8. Evading Difficult Material. It is hard work, but listen intently to everything that is said. Don’t let symbols get between you and learning. Strive diligently to understand. Take notes to learn what you don’t understand.
9. Letting emotion-laden words get between us and the Speaker. Slang, swear words, dialect, titles or not so politically correct, in fact politically horrible words can create emotions in us that create the listener to stop listening. Remember, these words are emotional judgments upon **YOUR** definition and decision that they should or should not be used. Once we place that judgment we stop listening and may miss very valuable information. We took my father-in-law to a very excellent movie. Right at the beginning a four letter word was spoken. He immediately got up and left. He lost out on a real life expanding experience by letting a word “over-emotionalize” him. Once again, this is akin to #2 above: **THE MESSAGE IS ALWAYS 10 TIMES MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE CLOTHING IN WHICH IT COMES DRESSED.**
10. And the most important of all, **REALIZING THE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THOUGHT SPEED AND SPEECH SPEED.** On the average we speak about 125 words a minute, but put a man in front of an audience and he’ll slow down to 100 words a minute nearly every time. We have an easy cruising speed of thought of about 400 words a minute. You can tune me in for about 10 seconds, grab the gist and blaze on out for the next 50 seconds, then tune in for 10 more only to find out that you already know all about the subject, so go on holiday for 50 more seconds! It is so easy to let a key word, action or lack of inters “peg” us onto another subject and off we go thinking of what we are going to do this evening, or the detail of that big contract. Speaking of contract, did you see the new contract the Lakers got, speaking of Lakers, my boat is still in dry dock, I always did like “Sittin’ on the Dock the Bay” by Otis Redding, Reddening of the skin, must be a fever, Johnny Fever is great on WKRP, burp! I suppose you get my point.

By being constantly aware of these 10 biggest problems in listening, we understand infinitely more than we ever expected! **HEAR IT, UNDERSTAND IT AND INCLUCATE IT THE FIRST TIME. IF YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND, TAKE NOTES AND IMMEDIATELY FIND OUT.**

