

Learning to Listen

A Seminar for Small Group Leaders & Shepherds

Schedule:

Sessions 1&2: 9:00 AM – The Importance of Listening; General Aims of Listening

Session 3: 9:45 AM – The C.O.A.C.H. Approach: First Steps

Session 4: 10:35 AM – Attending & Reflecting (w/ Role Playing)

Session 5: 11:45 AM – Empathizing & Reflecting (w/ Role Playing)

Session 6: 12:30 PM – Putting It All Together; Next Steps

Lunch & Feedback: 1:00 PM

- I. Session 1: The Importance of Listening in Shepherding People (9:00 AM)
- a. Discussion:
- i. How did you describe your listening skills in your registration form? Why did you pick that?
 - ii. What makes for a good listener?
 - iii. Why is it important to learn to listen well? List at least 3 reasons.
- b. Biblical Instruction on Listening, Caring, and Empathizing
- i. Listening as a way of _____.
 1. Christians are called to love their neighbors as themselves. (Matthew 22:39)
 2. One way to love your neighbor as yourself is to rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn. (Rom. 12:15). This puts other people's interests above your own. (Philippians 2:4)
 - ii. We are encouraged/commanded to cast our cares upon the Lord because we _____ he cares for us. (1 Peter 5:6-7)
 - iii. Furthermore, because the Lord _____ our struggles, he has empathy and compassion upon us. (Hebrews 4:14-16)
 - iv. Incarnational Caring: We see Jesus entering into our grief when Jesus weeps with Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus, *even though he knew he was going to resurrection Lazarus very soon.* (John 11:1-44, esp. vv.32-37)
- c. Practical Importance of Learning to Listen Well
- i. Any communication involves listening.
 - ii. Definition. We'll define listening today as taking time to hear another's experiences, thoughts, and emotions in order to show love and compassion.
 - iii. SG leaders need good listening skills to facilitate great discussions.
 - iv. You don't have to be an upfront, extroverted, or outgoing person to be an excellent listener.
 - v. Listening well benefits all your relationships, not just SG leading.
 - vi. Most people can significantly improve as listeners more than they realize. And often they can improve as listeners farther and faster than they can improve as teachers or discussion leaders.

- vii. Every communication you send is preceded by listening. So the better you listen, the better you can communicate.
 - viii. Some other reasons?
- d. Where we're going in this training...

II. Session 2: General Aims for Listening (9:20 AM)

- a. Discussion Questions
 - i. Is it possible for me to feel love from someone even if I don't believe they understand me?
 - ii. Is it possible for me to show compassion and truly listen to someone if I totally disagree with that person's choices?
- b. We'll suggest 2 general aims for listening.
 - i. Most people are not naturally good listeners, even the quiet people. Though being quiet may make people think you're a better listener!
 - ii. Therefore, many people make common mistakes in trying to listen to someone.
- c. Aim 1: Convey _____ by taking time to listen and hear another person out.
- d. Aim 2: Convey _____ by demonstrating you understand why they think and feel the way they do.
 - i. This is not the same as saying you understand what they're _____.
 - ii. This is not the same as saying you necessarily _____ with all their views.
 - iii. This is more like you understand where they're coming from, that you can see how they came to have those thoughts, feelings, choices.
- e. Result: You gain trust when people believe you care about them and understand them.
- f. These aims are not meant to set up giving advice to the other person. But when you successfully do these, others are more likely to receive advice from you.
- g. Q&A

III. Session 3: the C.O.A.C.H. Approach - Introductory Steps (9:45 AM)

- a. Discussion
 - i. Can you think of a time you shared a concern or problem with someone, and after that experience you were inclined to go back to this person in the future? What about that experience made you want to go back to that person?
 - ii. Can you think of time you shared a concern or problem with someone, after which you thought, "I'm not going to go back to this person next time,?" What about that experience made you decide to not go back to that person?

- b. Common missteps in listening to people
 - i. When you describe to the other person what they're thinking/feeling and they say, "Actually, that's not it. It's more like..."
 - ii. When you offer words to the other person who then thinks, "I've already heard this before. This person isn't telling me anything new..."
 - iii. When you offer advice/counsel and the person says, "I've already tried that... and it didn't work..."
- c. The C.O.A.C.H. Approach: the first five questions you'll want to ask.
 - i. **CONCERN:** Ask, "So, was there something on your mind you wanted to talk about?"
 - 1. If you're sure the person approached you for you to help them, such as a leader, counselor, you can be more specific, "I get the feeling there's something on your mind. What did you want to talk about?"
 - ii. **OTHERS:** Ask, "Have you talked to anyone else about this? What did they say?"
 - 1. "What do you think about what they said?"
 - 2. What can you infer if you're the first person they've talked to about this?
 - 3. What can you infer if they've talked to several other people about this already?
 - iii. **ATTEMPTED:** Ask, "So have you tried to do anything about this yet? What have you tried?"
 - 1. What can you infer if they've tried those things, and yet are still talking with you?
 - iv. **CHOICE:** Ask, "So, what are you thinking you might do?"
 - 1. What difference would it make in helping this person if he/she already had an idea of what to do next?
 - v. **HOW/HELP:** Ask, "How can I help?"
 - 1. Why should we ask this question when listening/helping someone?
- d. Why should we begin with these steps?
 - i. Consider two people coming to you with the same concern.
 - 1. One person has not talked to anyone else, not tried anything yet, and is completely unsure about what to do.
 - 2. The other person has talked to several people about this concern, even attempted to resolve it (with unsatisfactory results), and is now leaning towards trying yet solution.
 - 3. If you ask each person "How can I help?" they'll probably give you very different answers.
 - 4. Would you approach these two people with the same problem the same or differently? Why?
 - ii. We're seeking to understand before we seek to be understood.

- iii. You'll show someone love and compassion even if you have no other help to offer.
 - iv. They'll receive counsel better because they believe you understand them.
 - v. You'll probably offer better counsel in a better way with a greater understanding of all they've gone through.
- e. Role Playing/Example
- i. Tip: You don't have to do the COACH approach in that order, but it often makes sense.
 - ii. Observe the workshop leader talking with someone using the COACH approach.
 - iii. Get into groups of three, aka "triads."
 - iv. Designate each person as person A, B, or C.
 - v. For the first round, person A will share to person B with person C observing.
 - vi. Then we'll switch roles so every person can have a turn in each role.
 - vii. For each turn, have the Sharer talk about his/her issue to the Listener. The Listener should practice reflecting and asking questions.
 - viii. After each round, the Sharer describes how he/she felt with the listener. Then the Observer makes observations regarding the skills we've discussed today.
- f. Q&A

IV. Session 4: Attending & Reflecting – Part 1 (10:35 AM)

- a. Attending involves giving them your focused attention by...
 - i. Letting the other person share with minimal distractions or interruptions.
 - ii. Affirming that you're listening to them with phrases like, "I see." Or "Sure." Etc.
 - iii. Paying attention to the other person both in verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., your body language).
 - iv. Asking good follow-up questions to get a fuller understanding.
- b. Reflecting is paraphrasing back to the other person what you've heard.
 - i. Reflect to gauge how accurately you're hearing the other person.
 - ii. Reflect to let the other person sense how much you're hearing him/her.
 - iii. Phrases/words you can use
 - 1. "It sounds like you're saying that..."
 - 2. "So, it seems like you were..."
 - 3. "I get the impression for you this was..."
 - 4. etc.
- c. You attend and reflect on three types of statements
 - i. Emotions: what the person is feeling (usually about something that happened).

- ii. Events: what the other person perceived has happened.
 - iii. Thoughts: what the person thinks about what happened.
- d. Phrase your questions to draw out from a person all three types of statements
 - i. For events, try to focus on a specific event and draw out the details.
 - 1. “So, what happened?”
 - 2. “Where were you when you last felt this way?”
 - 3. “When did you last think about this?”
 - ii. For thoughts, use phrases like
 - 1. “So, when that happened, what was going through your mind?”
 - 2. “So, what do you think about that?”
 - iii. For emotions
 - 1. “When that happened, what were you feeling?”
 - 2. “Did that make you feel any particular emotion?”
- e. Phrase your reflections on the events, thoughts, and feelings as the person shares.
 - i. You reflect what you’re hearing from the person in at least one of two ways.
 - 1. You reflect the same kind of statement back to the person.
E.g., reflect an event to an event, emotion to emotion, and thought to thought.
 - 2. Or, you reflect back a different kind of statement.
 - ii. Reflecting a same kind of statement.
 - 1. For example, consider a person who said, “I shouted at her, stomped out of the room, and slammed the door.”
 - 2. You could say,
 - a. “Sounds like you really let her have it, hm?”
 - b. Or, “Seems like you had a lot to get off her chest.”
 - c. Or, “So... basically, you yelled at her and left.”
 - iii. Reflecting a different kind of statement.
 - 1. Consider the same statement, “I shouted at her, stomped out of the room, and slammed the door.”
 - 2. What kind of a statement is this: event, thought, or emotion?
 - 3. You could reflect this with an emotion:
 - a. “Sounds like you were furious at her...”
 - b. “So she really upset you, huh?”
 - c. “Looks like you must have been really angry, is that right?”
 - iv. Reflection is a skill in anticipating the other person.
 - 1. Beginner: you reflect by pretty much paraphrasing, using the same kind of statement.

2. Intermediate: you reflect by taking the other person's statements to their natural conclusion, often by reflecting a different kind of statement.
- f. Watch out!
 - i. Don't pelt the person with questions. This isn't an interview!
 - ii. Be OK with silence, esp. if the other person is emotional, gathering thoughts, etc.
 - iii. This may feel forced, fake, mechanical, or awkward at first. But with time, practice, and feedback, it can become more natural.
 - g. Role Playing in Triads
 - i. Get back into your group of three and continue asking about the concerns shared.
 - ii. We're going to do this in three rounds:
 - iii. Round 1: focus on the sharer's perceptions of the events.
 - iv. Round 2: focus on the sharer's thoughts of the issue/events.
 - v. Round 3: focus on the sharer's feelings of the issue/events.
 - h. Discussion:
 - i. What type of statement seems easier to draw out and reflect to the person?
 - ii. Is there a better order to draw these three types of statements out from the person?

V. Session 5: Empathizing & Reflecting (11:45 AM)

- a. How people tick: People's perceptions of the **events** influence their **thoughts** which produce their **emotions**.
 - i. People are often _____ of the connections.
 - ii. To really understand a person in a particular issue, you must listen to and accurately learn all three of these experiences and how they relate.
 - iii. To skillfully offer any help, you need to accurately assess these statements first.
- b. Discussion:
 - i. Which of these three are most people aware of: emotions, their perceptions of the events, or their thoughts?
 - ii. Which of these three do most people focus on? _____
 - iii. Which of these three drives the others more? _____
 - iv. Which of these three are people least aware of? _____
- c. My definition of **empathizing**: when you reflect back to the person the relationship between these things, often making a connection that the person didn't realize.
 - i. You're probably doing this when a person says, "Yes, that's exactly how I'm feeling!" or "You really understand me!" or "You put it even better than I did!"

- d. Role Playing
 - i. As a listener, ask questions to fill in each of these three types of statements about a certain issue. Reflect and ask questions to figure out the person's perception of the events, their feelings, and their thoughts about the events.
 - ii. You'll need to develop skill first in attending and reflecting.
 - iii. Empathizing is when you reflect back to a person how a certain event made the person feel, or how someone feels a certain way because of how they think about some event.
 - iv. Practice in triads.

VI. Putting it all Together and Next Steps (12:30 PM)

- a. What I do:
 - i. I'm usually ready to attend, reflect, and empathize in any conversation, setting, or relationship.
 - ii. If a person comes to me very distraught, then I'll usually attend/reflect/empathize first. Then later on use the COACH Approach.
 - iii. If a person comes to me fairly calm, collected, or thoughtful about an issues, I'll begin with the COACH Approach while attending/reflecting/empathizing.
 - iv. At least once during our conversation I will ask, "Is this what you were hoping to talk about?" or "Are we spending time on what you wanted to spend time on?"
 - v. As we almost end our conversation, I almost always ask, "Was this what you wanted to talk about?" or "Was any of this helpful?"
 - vi. I often don't have to give much advice because:
 - 1. Just having a good listener who reflects and empathizes helps someone process further.
 - 2. When people process further, they're usually in a better position to see what to do. Sometimes, it's obvious what they should do.
- b. Next Steps
 - i. Practice your attending, reflecting, and empathizing skills so they become more natural.
 - ii. Encourage each other and grow with others who attended this training since you now have additional common learning, vocabulary, and tools.
- c. Feedback – In the interest of saving time today, we'll email you a brief feedback form so we can get your input on how this may have benefited you, as well as get your input for how to improve in the future.
- d. Thank you for participating!