



## Podcast 14

### Active listening: how to hear what another person is really saying?, part 2

Before we discuss how to ask questions, let's make an experiment. Ask your friend or a family member to tell you about his or her dreams and listen carefully. Tip: if you find it hard to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say them – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused. Don't think of your own response or the next question. If a random thought creeps in your mind, just let it go and bring focus back to the speaker.

How was it? Did you manage to be a good listener? Did you recognise the emotion behind the words? If you could summarise all said in 2 sentences, what would you say?

Now, here are several tips to help you understand what another person really means or feels.

First is called summarizing. Basically, you repeat a shortened version of what another person said while keeping the main idea. It helps to keep track of the story and shows your presence and understanding. It will help you to synchronise and keep focus on the core of the story.

Try to summarise the next story in maximum 1-2 sentences: 'I finished my studies and then I started to work at a bank in the centre of the city where I live. I am still working over there. It is a nice place. My co-workers are kind, and the salary is satisfying. Still, lately, I get the feeling that I want to explore more, to travel around the world and to do something totally different.'

Second is asking about feelings of another person which is called 'reflection of feelings'. When listening, think about what the person could feel at that moment and name this feeling. For example:

'I was trying to talk to him, but our conversation ended in a fight!'

'Did you feel frustrated?'

It will help to stop for a moment and switch from a technical story to acknowledging feelings. Also, even if you name the feeling wrong, no worries: another person will correct you and give a name to a true feeling. For example: "No, I'm not frustrated. I am simply very sad."

Another tip is keeping silent and saying a simple sentence: 'Tell me more.' Remember that giving time to another person to speak up uninterrupted and being there with your mind and compassion means a lot. Just lean back, listen and say: "Tell me more.'

To finish, here are 3 taboos or communication blockers:

- quick reassurance: don't worry about it, everything will be ok;
- digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about;
- interruption, since the message you're sending is: I know it better, I already know it, what I'm saying is more interesting or important.

Don't worry if at the beginning you find it hard to fully focus on the person or stop yourself from interruption. Remember: sometimes, letting someone know the depth of your empathy by being there is all that's needed for that moment. Rather than worrying over the right words, what if we focused on sharing our time and compassion?

