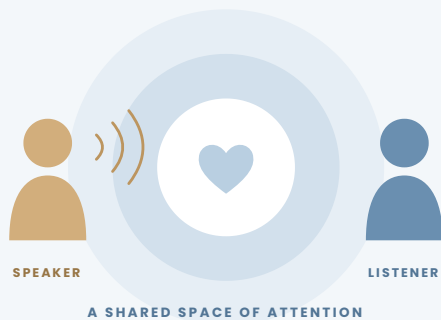


Being Present & Listening

THE QUIET SKILL THAT HELPS PEOPLE FEEL HEARD

Truly listening means giving someone your full attention — not just hearing their words, but staying present with their experience. Research suggests that high-quality listening helps people feel understood, less defensive and better able to reflect. It is a skill anyone can practise.



THREE LAYERS OF LISTENING

Going Beyond the Words

- 1 **Hearing the words**
Taking in what is said — the facts and the story. "What happened?"
- 2 **Understanding the meaning**
Grasping why it matters to them. "What does this mean to you?"
- 3 **Sensing feelings & needs**
Attuning to emotion beneath the words. "How are you feeling about it?"

Being Present The foundation of good listening

WHY PRESENCE MATTERS

Our Minds Often Wander

Presence means paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment without judging it. Yet attention drifts easily — often toward planning what to say next.

~47% of waking time, people's minds were wandering in one large study — and they tended to feel less happy when they did.

BEFORE YOU LISTEN

A 30-Second Arrival

- 1 **Pause** — phone away, turn toward them.
- 2 **Breathe** — one slow breath, feet on the floor.
- 3 **Set an intention** — "I'm here to understand, not to fix."
- 4 **Return gently** — when you drift, come back.

Core Listening Skills Adapted from the OARS skills of Motivational Interviewing

O Open questions

Invite fuller answers rather than yes or no.

"What was that like for you?"

A Affirmations

Recognise strengths and effort, genuinely.

"That took real courage."

R Reflections

Mirror back meaning and feeling.

"It sounds like you felt let down."

S Summaries

Draw threads together and check understanding.

"So what matters most is... did I get that right?"

Gentle Swaps Common habits, and what to try instead

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Planning your reply while they talk	> "Tell me more about that."
Jumping in with advice or solutions	> "What do you think would help?"
Sharing a similar story of your own	> "How was that for you?"
Reassuring too quickly — "Don't worry"	> "That sounds really hard."

Listening With Your Whole Self Non-verbal signs of attention — these vary across cultures, so follow the other person's comfort



Warm eye contact
Gentle, not staring



Open posture
Relaxed, facing them



Nods & "mm"
Small signs you're following



Calm pace
Unhurried; at ease with silence



No distractions
Devices set aside

Our full attention is one of the kindest gifts we can offer — and often, it is enough.

Reflection Practise, then notice

WHEN DO I FIND IT HARDEST TO STAY PRESENT?

WHAT HABIT MIGHT I GENTLY SWAP THIS WEEK?

HOW DID THE OTHER PERSON RESPOND WHEN I LISTENED?

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