Listen up!
Improving listening skills and awareness

@karenbachmann
“We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen more than we say.”

— Zeno of Citium
Hearing and Listening

Hearing
- Mechanism of the ear
- A sense
- Perceiving sound
- Passive
- Continuous and pervasive

Listening
- Ears are only one input
- A skill
- Making meaning from sound
- Active
- Conscious and selective
Listening depends on more than just the hearing sense
Listening is at the heart of *building* empathy
Listening is an active *practice* of empathy
“Wonderful things happen when people feel felt, when they sense that their minds are held within another’s mind.”

- Dan Siegel
Why is listening a struggle?

- Constant noise
- Hearing fatigue
- Distraction
- Internal barriers
- Not valued like speaking
- Not taught or practiced
Communication model focuses on sender
How we listen

• Listening is unique to each person
• Active or Conscious
  • Inner
  • Outer
  • Created
• Focused
Types of Listening

• Informational Listening (Listening to learn)
• Critical Listening (Listening to evaluate and analyze)
• Therapeutic or Empathetic Listening (Listening to understand feeling and emotion)
• Appreciative Listening (Listening for enjoyment)
• Rapport Listening (Listening to create connection)
• Selective Listening (Listening for specific information)
Barriers and filters

- Values and beliefs
- Attitudes
- Expectations
- Intentions
- Culture
- Situational barriers
Bad listening habits

• Forming a response before the speaker finishes
• Reliance on other channels – recordings and writing
• Not recognizing our own preconceptions and biases
• “Translating”
• Impatience
• Distraction
• Disinterest
Becoming aware of your barriers

• Self observation
  • Perceive yourself during a “listening”
  • Broaden your perspective moment to moment
• Sense your role
  • Patterns of behavior
  • Disengage and alter them
Gaining Listening Awareness

• **Speaker:** 2-min story that expresses how you handled a new situation

• **Listener:**
  • pay attention to the story, also noting what emotions are being expressed through body language that may not mesh with the story
  • share the most important emotions relevant to the story
  • if you were projecting your own emotional experience onto the speaker, adding to the story, or thinking and waiting to speak instead of listening

• **Switch roles**, play again, discuss any new revelations
Practice, as with any skill
Evaluate against benchmarks or with a partner
Persist
Active listening exercises

• Warm up
  • Silence
  • Savoring
• Calisthenics
  • “The mixer”
  • Changing listening positions
  • RASA = Receive, Appreciate, Summarize, Ask
• Flexibility
  • Techniques that improve mindfulness and discipline
Informational and Critical Listening

Give the gift of enough silence
Know and control your biases and inner voice
Accept their mental model (listen with mind and heart)
Summarize and Ask (RASA)
Therapeutic or Empathetic Listening

Gift of Silence: Understanding vs. retention
Establish the right listening position
Humble questioning
Receive and Appreciate (RASA)
Creating “a listening”

- Understanding listening positions – awareness, presence, consciousness
- Actively designing “a listening”
  - Beyond session planning or writing your script
  - Preparing your mind to receive
- Preparing the context mindful of all the potential barriers and removing as many as possible
- Planning to check on your listening
  - “Where am I listening from?”
  - “Is this working for me?”
Takeaways

• Listening relies on multiple senses and inputs
• Listening is a learnable skill
• Listening is a key to empathy and understanding
• Listening faces challenges, but you can manage them
• Listening is a lifetime practice
• We can design our listenings in every facet of our work
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lisamcmichael.com
@toknowlisa
Resources

• Listening Skills: http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html
• International Listening Association: http://www.listen.org/
• Conscious Listening, Julian Treasure (Udemy)
• People Skills for UX: Listening with Julian Treasure and Steve Portigal
• How to Speak, How to Listen, Mortimer J. Adler
• Can We Just, Like, Get Over the Way Women Talk?, Ann Friedman
  http://nymag.com/thecut/2015/07/can-we-just-like-get-over-the-way-
  women-talk.html?mid=twitter-share-thecut
• Are You Leading or Lording? https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-leading-
  lording-bill-j-koza
• 17 Secrets to Native listening Skill in English, Gabby Wallace (Udemy)
• Dr. Dan Siegel: http://www.drdansiegel.com/about/mindsight/
• Listening in the Workplace:
  http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu/resources/tipsheets/activelistening/
  ListeningintheWorkplace.pdf
Thank you!

karen@designforcontext.com
@karenbachmann
https://www.slideshare.net/karenbachmann
www.linkedin.com/in/karen-bachmann-UXDesigner-DfC