



## Listening Well with a Curious, Humble Heart

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How are you doing?

What about awkward silences?

What is the essential mindset of a good listener?

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“Humble inquiry is the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you don’t already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person . . .”

Edgar Schein

# Listening Well

**How do you know when someone is not listening to you well?**

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**How does it make you feel when that happens?**

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**What would you observe about a person who is listening well?**

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**What do you appreciate about someone listening to you?**

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## Listening Skills

### 1. Listen with your \_\_\_\_\_.

Give the person your full attention.  
Try to enter into their frame of reference, their world.  
Focus on what's behind their words.  
Stay present.

### 2. Listen with your \_\_\_\_\_.

Are you maintaining comfortable eye contact?  
Does your voice project interest in their words?  
Does your body posture say, "I'm interested"?  
What are the person's non-verbal signals communicating to you?

### 3. Listen with your \_\_\_\_\_.

Paraphrase or summarize main points.  
Ask clarifying questions, if needed.  
Avoid finishing sentences or providing missing words.  
Avoid giving advice or solutions while they are sharing.

### 4. Listen with your \_\_\_\_\_.

Listen for the meaning behind the words, gestures, and body language.  
What is the person *not* saying?  
Cautiously test your intuition with clarifying questions

### 5. Listen with the \_\_\_\_\_.

Use spiritual discernment.  
Ask yourself, "Should I share this with this person? When should I share it?"  
How can you share in a way that fosters the discovery process?

## How might this work in a conversation?

The 7-38-55 Rule –

## Body Language Basics

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What are some ways we stumble as listeners?

## Examples of conversation dampeners

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## Examples of conversation deepeners

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## Purpose and Power of Questions in Conversation

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**BIG GROUP Exercise:**

Choose to be intentionally \_\_\_\_\_.

Become an \_\_\_\_\_ listener.

Be \_\_\_\_\_ and never \_\_\_\_\_.

Show that you're actually \_\_\_\_\_.

Don't talk while the other person is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Barriers to Active Listening**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

# Humble Inquiry – Meaningful Connection Through Genuine Interest

TWOWP

**Key Learning Points:** Humble Inquiry is a description and phrase brought to life by Edgar Schein. At its core it means adopting a humble approach and asking genuine questions of others in an effort to learn, connect and build a meaningful relationship.

## Humble Inquiry

Humble Inquiry, a phrase coined by Edgar Schein, was explained by him as *“The fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you don’t already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person.”*

Fundamentally, in our view, humble inquiry is a blend of a mindset and set of behaviours that help build meaningful relationships, connection and understanding. Humble inquiry involves adopting humility and curiosity and asking questions out of a genuine interest in others’ thoughts and feelings, rather than imposing one’s own assumptions or agenda. It also requires the application of focus and attentively listening to what the person you’re speaking to says as well.

At its core, humble inquiry is about fostering deeper, more sincere connections. It encourages individuals to set aside egos and engage in conversations with a mindset that is open to learning and understanding rather than merely responding or waiting to speak. This method is particularly effective in building trust and openness in various relationships — from personal interactions to professional environments.

The art of humble inquiry requires one to ask questions that are open-ended and non-directive. These questions are designed not to lead or manipulate the conversation but to explore and uncover the thoughts and feelings of others. For example, instead of asking, “Don’t you think we should start the project now?” one might say, “How do you think we should proceed with the project?” This subtle shift in phrasing can lead to significant differences in how the conversation unfolds, promoting a more collaborative and inclusive dialogue.

## Benefits in the Workplace

In the world of work, leaders and managers who make space for humble inquiry typically have employees who feel valued and understood, which often leads to increased wellbeing, job satisfaction and performance. In addition, humble inquiry can also help set the foundation of a psychologically safe and learning oriented culture.

Humble inquiry can also strengthen the internal social bonds within a team, which can also improve the leader or managers sense of connection, purpose, value and relationships, as well as their own wellbeing.

## What holds us back

We ask a lot of people what holds them back from adopting more of a humble inquiry approach in the workplace, and we typically receive similar answers, most of which are aligned with the general guidance on what stops people doing more of this.

The most common answer we receive is that people think humble inquiry is time intensive, and they feel they don’t have time for it. This is a bit of a fallacy though as we can use humble inquiry as an approach in many of our existing interactions, so it doesn’t really take more time. It definitely can, though, take more effort. It can require some self-regulation and focus to really be on someone else’s agenda, to be interested, to be humble and to make space for others. It’s important to think of this as an investment though, not just a cost.

People also tell us that adopting this humble approach might not feel “leaderly” (i.e. leaders know the answers and are powerful), and that it might go against an organizational culture and what people expect. It’s certainly the case that some stereotypes of “leaders” seem far removed from the idea of humble inquiry, which is unfortunate. While this can make it a bit harder for people to adopt a humble approach, we find that when they do they see benefits fairly quickly.

Another thing that we think gets in the way and prevents people from adopting a more humble and inquiring approach is our egos. People generally agree that our egos can be a barrier to humility in the workplace. Overcoming these barriers and the sense of social threat that we might feel if we lower of status to a place of humility can be hard, but speaking about it is a great starting point.

## Putting it All Together (Adapted from Jeff Rosenau's [Christ-Like Dialogue](#))

### Choose to Be Intentionally Present

Turn off your phone or silence it. Eliminate distractions and focus on the person talking. Remember that you can only listen intently when you're not distracted.

### Become an Other-minded Listener

Be quick to listen and slow to speak and learn to ask open ended questions. Be genuinely interested in the other person's perspective.

### Be Empathetic and Never Judge

Listening well is choosing to see a situation through another person's eyes. Extend respect, compassion and grace to the degree that you would like it extended to you.

### Show That You're Actually Listening

Your body language shows how attentive you are. Make eye contact. Lean forward and learn to nod. Resist thinking about what you will say next in your response to them.

### Don't Talk While the Other Person is Still Talking

Wait for the other person to finish talking before you speak. Love well and show sincere interest in their words. Instead of funneling, ask a curious question!

## Barriers to active listening (Adapted from Alexander Lyon's work at the [Communication Coach Academy](#))

7. **Distractions:** be assertive and make changes, like change your position or turn your phone off
  8. **Preoccupations:** Exercise Mental discipline, intentionally engage
  9. **Listening too much to the details:** Choose to focus on the overall message.
  10. **The topic is boring:** Change your mindset. Choose to be interested. BE CURIOUS.
  11. **The rebuttal tendency:** The difference between listening to reply vs listening to understand – Steven Covey Invest in what they are saying and commit to pausing before responding.
  12. **The speaker is boring:** Decide to give them grace. Have compassion. Focus on their message.
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## Resources:

Alexander Lyon's [Communication Coach Academy](#) is helpful for both workplace and home communication challenges. See these links for more tips on avoiding the barriers to effective communication and communicating well:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6JGi2voyDM> 6 Listening Barriers
2. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwWj\\_SfDpzg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwWj_SfDpzg) Effective Listening Skills
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Loh8nYQdOCQ> Reflective Listening Skills

Jeff Rosenau's [Christ-Like Dialogue](#) has excellent resources for interpersonal communication of all kinds, with a focus on glorifying God with our words.

## Books and articles to consider:

1. [Learning to Listen: Essential Skills for Every Counselor](#) by Joseph Hussung – Skill development for EVERYONE! Not just for counselors!
2. [The Next Conversation: Argue Less, Talk More](#) by Jefferson Fisher – Step by step help with recognizing triggers and patterns that derail ordinary communication, including helpful guides for how to speak directly and confidently in a variety of relationships and settings.
3. [Christlike Dialogue: Engaging in Conversations that Honors God](#) by Jeff Rosenau – Practical 10 week small group curriculum to facilitate learning to speak and listen in ways that deepen conversation for God's glory.
4. [Friendship: The Rest of Being Genuinely Known](#) by Brad Hambrick - Questions that facilitate conversations that deepen friendships. This is excellent, gospel centered and detailed. Purchase the audio (\$3.29) and download the slides, which are free!
5. [How to Do Friendship in the Church](#) by Ed Welch – Audio session (\$3.29) from the 2013 CCEF Conference "Not Alone". Excellent and relatable for all who want to engage with friends and develop more godly friendships in the body-of-Christ.
6. How to [Communicate with Teens](#) by Tedd Tripp – longish, practical article with additional helpful links at the end.
7. [Parenting an Angry Teen Who Won't Communicate](#) by Richard Horne – This is an audio lesson / presentation you will need to purchase (\$3.29)
8. [How can I help my husband be more communicative and expressive?](#) By Aaron Sironi – Short (free) video, with transcript, primarily for wives. Super encouraging with thoughtful suggestions for understanding this pattern.