



Listening Well with a Curious, Humble Heart

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?

How does it make you feel when that happens?

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

What do you appreciate about someone listening to you?

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 our status to a place of humility can be hard, but speaking about it is a great starting point.