

Coaching Skill

Deep Listening

What the skill is:

One of the best teachers I've found on the power of this topic is Stephen Covey in his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People". A great read and very helpful if you haven't already read it.

He says:

When another person speaks, we're usually "listening" at one of four levels. We may be ignoring another person, not really listening at all. We may practice pretending. "Yeah. U-huh. Right." We may practice selective listening, hearing only certain parts of the conversation. Or we may even practice attentive listening, paying attention and focusing energy on the words that are being said. But very few of us ever practice the fifth level, the highest form of listening, empathetic listening.

Empathy is not sympathy...Empathetic listening is so powerful because it give you accurate data to work with. Instead of projecting your own autobiography and assuming thoughts, feelings, motives and interpretation, you are dealing with the reality inside another person's head and heart. You're listening to understand. You're focused on receiving a deep communication from another human soul.

Purposes and Benefits

1. Some of us have NEVER been truly listened to.

Just giving someone the benefit of your full attention with the intention of really understanding them, is a gift and a blessing.

2. Being listened to like that opens a person up, helps them understand themselves, see their own patterns, calms them down.
3. It demonstrates true respect and caring.
4. It gets the coach out of 'advising and doing'.

Basics of Skill

1. Slow Down. Realize the person in front of you is doing their best and has more resources than they may be aware of.
2. Use open body position. Don't stare, but make good eye contact. Don't fidget or interrupt.
3. Say things like "tell me more about that" or "how did that make you feel" Open ended questions that can't be answered with simple yes or no.
4. Summarize what you heard. "Did I understand that correctly"
5. Resist giving advice or inserting your own story.
6. Legitimize the feelings that get uncovered. If they say "I'm scared", you can say "I can understand that, it's normal to be frightened.
7. Use silence more. Let a few seconds go by without saying anything. Wait for the wisdom.
8. See the words coming out of your partners mouth as pearls of great value to them and to you.

Practice Skill in Role Play:

Scenario: Your participant shares some of the difficulties he is experiencing, and you realize that you know very little about what it is like to have such struggles. You're beginning to feel like you aren't sure if you can support him in the way he needs to be supported. Q. What can you do?

Participant: Using your imagination and/or situations from your own life, share a story of some difficulties you are having.

Mentor: Your job is to truly understand your partner. At the end of the session you want your partner to feel that you 'get him/her'.