Eight Keys to Good Listening in Table Discussion

Too often we ascribe misunderstanding to failures on the part of those who originate messages. Obviously the fault can as easily lie in ineffective listening, or ineffective reading. Recent research has demonstrated wide differences in listening habits of persons who are effective interpreters of messages and those who are ineffective. Following are eight statements describing listening habits which are characteristics of effective listeners.

1. The good listener is interested in people and ideas. He finds few ‘uninteresting’. Be selfish and look for useful knowledge in every situation.
2. The good listener is less critical of appearance, dress and mannerisms of speakers. Cut through the manner to the substance.
3. The good listener seeks to ‘understand’ first and withholds his criticism. Try restating the other person’s ideas. TRY to view the situation from their ‘shoes’.
4. The good listener seeks the ‘central idea’ which makes facts useful and meaningful. Don’t memorize facts but absorb generalizations.
5. The good listener works for a favorable listening environment. Don’t accept distractions, eliminate them.
6. The good listener seeks out difficult listening material. Work on the situation you are seeking. Do you avoid the situations which require thought?
7. The good listener reacts thoughtfully to emotion laden words or ideas. Seek out the words which over stimulate you and get your reactions under control.
8. The good listener uses the advantage of thought speed over speech speed. Summarize what you have heard. Predict the direction the ideas of the speaker could take. Check the speaker’s generalizations against your own experience. Support the speaker’s ideas with examples of your own.

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