

You Think That You're Listening.... But Are You Actually Hearing What I Am Saying?

"We have two ears and one mouth, so that we can listen twice as much as we speak"

Epictetus, Greek Stoic Philosopher. (55AD-135AD)

In our fast-paced culture conversations have little to do with communication – they are about *talking*. While one person speaks, the others are not *hearing* what is being said because they are already planning what *they* are going to say next. How much of what the speaker has said has actually been 'heard'? What is in your head when someone is speaking to you? Are the words that they are saying to you in there, or is it something else? Have you gone to some other place or are you with some other person, having a separate conversation in your mind? How much attention are you really paying?

Just for once, decide to have a day of listening, not speaking. When someone is talking to you, make a concerted effort to listen hard and comprehend what it is they are actually saying. If necessary, repeat back to them what you *think* they have said – just to be certain you have really taken in what they are trying to tell you. Give them time to finish their sentences, without jumping in because you think you know what they are going to say next. You may be wrong. This is called 'active listening' and is a skill that takes practice.

Suddenly, the communication you have with people is heightened. The more you listen the more meaningful everything will become. People will respond better to you if they feel you are *really* listening and by '*hearing*' what others are saying you may find that you learn something.

For help in improving your listening and other communication skills, contact Kate Harper at Harper Coaching on 01540 662196 e-mail: kate@harpercoaching.com www.harpercoaching.com

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