

Listening Tips for Difficult Situations



Workplace

During your workday, you are going to encounter boring and uninteresting meetings or lectures which require attention that may be hard for you to give.

We've all sat through a lengthy presentation in which it was hard to stay alert or a meeting that just seemed to go on and on without accomplishing anything. In these situations, it's key that you stay engaged. Use the tips and techniques below to help you stay focused so you can better listen and take in what's going on.

Listening During Boring Meetings

- In a boring meeting, try taking notes. By incorporating an activity into your listening, you can focus your attention.
- Mentally list or relate the points being made. How do they affect you? What do you know about them?
- Ask questions and stay engaged with the speaker.

Staying Alert During Lectures

- Sit near the front of the room and try to have a clear view of the speaker. Avoid sitting next to noisy people, and try to be as close to the speaker as possible.
- Do research about the lecturing topic beforehand. Bring notes or take notes while the speaker is talking. However, don't let taking notes distract you—write down only what's important.
- Give eye contact and attention to the speaker.

Stay Focused in an Interview

- If you are unclear about what the person has said, try repeating what he or she has just told you. This will tell you if you heard the person correctly.
- Try to have a normal conversation, rather than one person asking and the other answering.
- Give eye contact and appropriate body language.

Handling Problems Through Effective Communication

- When a person approaches you with a problem, listen to what he or she tells you, and then rephrase the problem. This way, the person can correct you if needed, and you can also help him or her visualize a solution.
- Get to know your colleagues and how you or other colleagues can best help them.
- Don't sit behind your desk when someone comes to you for advice. Sit next to or across from the person with nothing in between.
- Try not to be judgmental. Be understanding, and truly listen to what the person is saying. Don't get caught up in mental or emotional filters; try your best to be an effective listener.
- Notice the body language of yourself and adjust it if necessary. Notice the body language of the other person; it'll give you insight into what he or she is really trying to say.
- After you and the person finish talking about the problem, summarize what's been said and agree on steps to move forward.

Listening to Your Boss

- Don't let attitudes interfere with listening. Drop judgments and sharp criticisms when speaking with him or her.
- Avoid mental and emotional filters when you talk to your boss. Talk and listen with a nonjudgmental attitude.
- Be aware of body language and tone.
- Listen with empathy and understanding.

