

LISTENING TO OTHERS

On our way to becoming great leaders we need to hone-in our skills to become great with people. There are quite a few things that I could speak on that will sharpen our abilities, but tonight we are going to concentrate on one area that will help us, not only on this journey with Noble 8, but in every relationship in our lives.

One of the most important things that a leader can do is to **Listen**.

All too often we don't take time to listen to others. To genuinely listen, closely...hanging on every word, without forming a response as they speak.

Here are some key things that will help you to gain better listening skills.

1. Listen with intent to understand

There is a quote by Stephen R. Covey that explains this. "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply."

When you listen, really concentrate on what is being told to you as someone speaks. It shows you really care about them and what they have to say. Practice hearing what is said, if you don't hear them it makes them feel insignificant, as if what they have to say does not matter. You need to listen closely, giving your full attention to them. Shine the spot light on them, not yourself.

2. Mindful Conversation- be Present

Mindful conversation is about being fully present in a conversation. When you are engaged on a mindful conversation, your whole attention is concentrated in what the speaker is saying. You loose contact with your worries and engage completely in the current situation. Body language is huge. If you are fidgeting, looking at your phone or even if you act like you are in a hurry, it comes across that you are not interested enough in them to spare time for them. Smile be attentive and be engaged.

3. Make eye contact

Listening with your eyes is very important. When you keep eye contact with the person you are talking to it indicates that you are focused and paying attention. If you are constantly looking around the room and watching what is happening it will show that you could care less about the conversation. Remember the 70% rule (you should maintain eye contact for 70 percent of the time while listening). Eye contact is a must!

4. Do not cut in/interject or finish sentences

These are interruptions that disrespect the other person. They are usually combined with an attitude or words that deny or devalue the other person. This can become a very destructive habit when combined with an unwillingness to recognize the value in hearing, interacting with, and learning from others' thoughts. So, by interjecting opinions or Cutting in, it will make them feel like you don't value what they have to say. It will show that you are not listening to their words and are more concerned with interjecting your own opinion. Finishing sentences is also a big no. It could be that you are either excited or impatient, but

keep in mind that even if your interruption wasn't negative, people can take it negatively. Listening actively is crucial in conversation.

5. Do not offer advice (unless asked)

Listening shows you care about the person who is talking more than offering advice to them. Offering advice makes the conversation about you. You may have heard it before...they will use things like... "here is what I would do," or "I will tell you what will work." Let them get out what they want to say, a lot of times they will talk through issues without you saying a word. If asked advice, ask a question back. You could use, "I hear what you are saying, what do you think would be the right path to take?" They probably already have an answer. If they still want help, consider using a story of what you did in your life that may have helped you. While giving advice might feel good, stepping back and sharing experiences can often be more helpful. This way you are showing them what worked for you, but not telling them what to do. Discussing past experiences focuses on sharing valuable information. It could be ways you made it around issues, resources you used or how you dealt with relationships. Even telling stories that led to a bad outcome can highlight something that the other person is missing.

Only give advice when asked.

Keep in mind, when we listen to others in these ways it makes us better leaders. It shows that we have a genuine interest in others and that we really do care. We don't have to know everything, we don't have to solve every issue and we certainly don't have to fix people. We just need to be better at listening with intent and hearing what is said. The more interest we show in others, the more interest they will have in us. Let your full attention be on them, the gift of listening is a rare one these days.

These skills are not always easy, especially if we have developed bad habits over the years, habits of speaking over others, interrupting, cutting in and finishing sentences. Knowing the "why" of how these skills help should also help us answer two very important questions. Ultimately the questions are, "Is this really worth it?" and "Is changing myself going to improve my relationships?" Embrace Change.

Let's be different, let's learn to show we care through listening.