The Power of Listening
July 2016
What is Listening?

• **Listening:**
  – Receiving and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages
  – To hear something with thoughtful attention

• Effective communication is **2-way**
  – Depends on speaking and listening
Listening vs. Hearing

**Hearing** – passive

**Listening** – active; learned process; a skill

*You must choose to participate in the process of listening.*
Fast Facts

- We listen at 125-250 wpm, and think at 1000-3000 wpm.
- 75% of the time we are distracted or forgetful.
- 20% of the time, we remember what we hear.
- More than 35% of businesses think listening is a top skill for success.
Why Be A Good Listener?

• Listening is the most powerful form of acknowledgment
  …a way of saying, “You are important.”

• Listening creates acceptance and openness
  …conveys the message that “I am not judging you.”

• Listening reduces stress and tension
  …minimizes confusion and misunderstanding, eliminating related stress and tension.

• Listening is CRITICAL in conflict resolution
  …much conflict comes from the need to be heard. Successful resolution depends on being a non-anxious presence.
Barriers to Listening

• Pre-judging the speaker
  – Ex: too boring, disorganized, uninteresting topic, etc.

• External distractions
  – Ex: e-mail, twitter, texting, Facebook, another conversation, etc.

• Mentally preparing response

• Language/culture differences

• Faking attention
  – Ex. daydreaming
Active Listening

• … Allows you to make sure you hear the words **and** understand the meaning behind the words

• **Goal:** go beyond listening to understanding
1. Listen
2. Question
3. Reflect-paraphrase
4. Agree that idea is understood
Step 1: Listen

- To feelings as well as words
  - Words – Emotions – Implications

- Focus on speaker
  - Don’t plan, speak, or get distracted
  - Put away distractions such as cell phone, reading materials, Facebook, etc.
  - Look them in the eye

- What is speaker talking about?
  - Topic? Speaker? Listener? Others?
Active Listening Requires…

- **Verbal encouragement**
  - Encouragement gives permission, requests additional information, and provides direction.
  - Examples include statements like "Can you tell me more about that?" Or "I'm curious about …"

- **Non-verbal encouragement**
  - Body language.
  - Non-verbal "encouragement" behaviors include nodding your head, leaning forward and eye contact.
  - Facial expressions, like smiles, are used.
Step 2: Question

- **3 Purposes**
  - Demonstrate you are listening
  - Gather information
  - Clarification

- **Open-Ended Questions are Best**
  - ‘Tell me more.’
  - ‘How did you feel?’
  - ‘Then what happened?’
Step 3: Reflect-Paraphrase

- Use a feedback loop to ensure accuracy
  - Restate, paraphrase, reword the person’s statement
- Reflect what is said (in your words)
- Reflect feelings
- Reframe
  - Capture the essence of the communication
  - Remove negative framing
  - Move toward problem-solving
Step 4: Agree

- Get speaker’s consent to your reframing
  - Ex: “So, you need help with…” “Yes.”

- Speaker has been heard and knows it!
  - “We have… , will that work?”

- Solution is near!
  - “I can help you with that…”
• To be recognized and remembered
• To feel valued
• To feel appreciated
• To feel respected
• To feel understood
• To feel comfortable about a want or need
Conclusion

• Remember that the objective of all of this is to increase understanding of the patron’s need so that you will be able to serve them more adequately.