COMMUNICATION | LISTENING | SPEAKING

Do I have your full Attention?

When you listen, people will like you, and the more you listen, the more they'll like you. If they like you, they'll trust you, and when they trust you, they'll listen to you.

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The most flattering thing you can do for anyone is to give them your full attention. When you listen to someone, you are giving that person the utmost respect.

Focus on being present with the person you are communicating with. Always focus on being there.

I'm not just talking about being there physically but being there 100 percent mentally.

Let me share with you a personal story. I used to call my brother up to chat and then whilst on the phone I would check my emails and let my mind wander to other things. It would drive my brother up the wall because I wasn't being present when I made the phone call. I never understood how painful it was until he started to do it to me. From that point on, we agreed that if we were to call one another, we would respect each other and be present on the phone, or there was no point calling. Needless to say, we have great conversations now and get straight to the point.

How many times have you been in that position with friends, business associates, or your spouse, where you were just in a different place mentally?

How many of you have even been mentally alert, but you were so worried about talking that it didn't matter what the other person was saying. You wanted that person to grab a drink so that it could be your turn to start

talking. I know I'm hitting a chord with most of you.

A few years ago, if someone would had asked me to tell them the difference between hearing and listening, I would have told them that the two were synonymous.

They're not.

If you decide to listen to a friend, then spend the five, ten, twenty minutes truly being there and listening to your friend. People can sense when you're simply acting like you're listening while your mind is elsewhere, and they know when you're 100 percent truly there.

> ***Work on being 100 percent present wherever you are. This will very quickly set you apart from the rest.***

This single aspect will help you seal more deals, grow your business, have better friendships, fuel passionate relationships, help you better communicate with the opposite sex, and much more.

One afternoon, I was talking to a lady in her late forties whose kids had grown up. We were chatting about potentially doing business together, and from the word go, she seemed very closed and defensive. I knew that we would not move forward if she remained the way she was. After we'd chatted for a while, she still didn't seem to be at ease. Having actively listened and paid full attention to her, I realized that her kids were her pride and joy. I could see this from the spark in her eyes every time she mentioned one of her kids. I then asked questions about her kids and what they were doing with their lives? Instantly, she glowed and started chatting about them. She opened up from that point on, and we carried on having a very relaxed, warm, and successful talk, which went on for hours. Needless to say, we did business in the end. My business partner couldn't believe it. He had talked with this lady on numerous occasions and wondered why he couldn't get the same result. With a cheeky smile, I told him that his problem was just that - he talked.

> Robert McCloskey said it brilliantly, *"I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."*

Actively listening is a skill you must master. It is all about paying attention to what the other party is trying to convey, both in what they say and how they say it.

By actively listening, you remember things about the people you talk with. It could be something to do with their work, family, or sports. Perhaps an associate told you that she was going to watch her son's game later in the day. If you were to meet that person in the next few days and ask, "Hey, by the way, how did your son's game go?" you'll not only hear the answer but see a smile beam from her face.

Get yourself a diary or create an electronic database on your computer. Use it to write notes about the meetings you have during the day. For example, in your meeting with John Smith, he mentioned that he had a surprise trip planned for his girlfriend to fly to Paris and pop the big question. After your meeting or at the end of your day, jot down a note in your diary about it. This serves as very strong ammunition for the next time you have a conversation with John Smith. People just love it if you remember something personal about them from a previous conversation because it shows that you were paying them full attention and were interested in them rather than in being interesting.

> In the words of Wilson Mizner, *"A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something."*

I feel it's so important for everyone to know this because this single point can take your friendships, relationships, work or business to an *astonishing* level. It will boost you right through to the top. You will literally be mind boggled at the response you will get from people when you start to actively listen. People will sense something different about you, and the majority of them won't know what it is that's making you so mesmerizing. A few will pick up on your improved listening skills but the majority of people will be left wondering how you do it. You will be an enigma.

When you actively listen, you'll be able to understand what matters

most to the person you're dealing with.

You must not have the intention of selling your idea or product or be worried about what you'll get out of this conversation. You must genuinely spend time finding out more about the other person. You must drop your motive and be focused on truly getting to know the person. This will help you be genuine in understanding this person's needs. You never know, he or she could potentially become a lifetime friend. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by being a great person to communicate with.

What is the easiest way to actively listen?

You don't even have to talk much or worry about having good things to say. All you have to do is learn to ask questions. Don't ask a question that will only give you a *yes* or *no* answer. Those are what we call closed-ended questions. You must ask open-ended questions - questions that help people open up to you and help you to see what matters the most to them. This will also help the conversation to flow instead of being filled with those awkward pauses that many of us have experienced. Ensure that your voice is sincere and not that of a person who's been trained to interrogate prisoners.

You can ask many more open-ended questions to find out more about the person you're communicating with. You're not in any way interrogating people if your questions are genuine and caring. The next time you talk to someone, try to imagine that person as an onion and start gently peeling away layer by layer with your questions. You want to peel away and have the people you're conversing with bare their souls to you willingly so you can connect with them. Remember to do so without any ulterior motives. Always remember that this is about building great relationships with people.

When you pay attention and listen to people actively, you create a warm relationship. You create trust.

When you're listening to someone, you're showing them respect and you're valuing them as a person.

When you listen, people will like you, and the more you listen, the more they'll like you. If they like you, they'll trust you, and when they trust you, they'll listen to you. They will be open to new friendships, relationships, and partnerships with you.

You will be compelling and mesmerizing beyond your wildest imagination.

Kevin Abdulrahman is The Man Inspiring Millions. He is an International Author of THE BOOK on Winning The Game Of Life, a Keynote Speaker, Mind Nutrition Expert, World Class Mind Coach to the Elite and an In-Demand Trainer. Kevin's articles are regularly published in magazines, reports, newsletters and newspapers, constantly being used as resources all over the world. Kevin helps winning organizations, universities, sports teams and individuals create breakthrough results.

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