



Are You a Good Listener?

21 WAYS TO TELL

In a world where communication happens at the speed of light and we feel more “connected” after a 140-character tweet—listening is a dying artform. Few of us possess the time or the training to receive the stories of those around us. Unfortunately this means people are withering around us. They carry their lives tucked deep within them, and long for somebody (anybody!) to ask for and absorb what’s on their minds, what makes up their lives.

So we’ve created a brief inventory to help identify some strengths and weaknesses of your personal listening style. Again, it’s an artform. So expect to need a lot of practice! But don’t let that stand in the way of you taking a few definitive steps to loving better through listening.

! INSTRUCTIONS

Place a "+" to indicate a **strength**: *"Hey, I'm doing something right! This describes me."*

Place a "-" to indicate a **weakness**: *"Nope, I'm not there yet."*

If you find a statement neither a strength nor a weakness of yours, leave it blank.

Then, select 3-4 weaknesses you'd like to improve.

People come away from talking to you and possess a better understanding of themselves.

You wait a few seconds after the person has stopped talking to see if they have more to say.

You practice “reflective listening,” using words like, “So I hear you saying that you’re...”

You’re comfortable with abstaining from advice at times, to simply be with someone in their grief. (Think of what Job’s friends didn’t do.)

You ask questions that cause people to explore what they haven’t before.

People often respond to you, “That’s a good question”—but it’s okay with you if you’re not the person with all the good questions.

You refrain from interrupting.

You’re comfortable with not having an answer for some of life’s “unfixables.”

You use facial expressions that are receptive: soft eyes, nodding, eye contact.

You pray silently for a person while listening, and ask God for wisdom in responding.

You refrain from finishing a person’s sentences.

You ask for clarification when you don’t understand what the other person means.

You don’t feel the need to prove yourself as wise or helpful.

Rather than planning your responses, you try to set those aside in your head and focus on what’s being said.

People are noticeably comforted after you spend time listening to them.

- Your advice to a person is highly individualized, reflecting back what you've heard them say and steering clear of pat answers and cliches.
- You have time in your schedule to listen to friends.
- Before offering advice, you offer compassion and understanding:
"I am so sorry. That sounds incredibly hard."
- You share your own circumstances that relate, but are careful not to refocus the conversation on you, or to indicate your circumstances were worse/harder.
- You think of your friend's experience after you've left the conversation, internalizing their struggle. They're on your heart, so you pray for them, too.
- More than a problem being fixed, you prioritize that the speaker feels heard, received, and understood.

! BONUS

Have your spouse take this inventory evaluating you as a listener.