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## Listening Blocks

What's the first thing you notice when someone talks to you? How often do you hear someone speak but then realize you're not sure what the person just said? If you are doing something other than focusing on what someone is saying (for example, silently thinking about something else), you create blocks that interfere with effective or active listening. The following "listening blocks" explain how you may appear to be listening but in fact are doing something else that prevents you from taking in what the person is saying. As you read the descriptions, think about what "listening blocks" can get in the way when you're in a leadership role.

### Rehearsing

While someone is talking you are busy silently rehearsing or planning a reply, it's harder to concentrate on what the person actually is saying.

### Judging

If you're focused on how a person is dressed, looks, or talks, you may prejudge the person and dismiss the idea he or she is describing as unimportant or uninformed.

### Identifying

If you're occupied thinking about your own experience and launch into a story before the person even finishes telling his or her story, you may lose sight of what the other person was trying to communicate.

### Advising

If you're intent on offering just the right advice for someone's problems before the person is done talking, you might not fully understand the individual's situation.

### Sparring

If you're focused on disagreeing with what someone else is saying, you're probably not giving the other person a chance to express himself or herself.

### Put-downs

If you're using sarcastic comments to put down another person's point of view, you could draw the other person into an argumentative conversation in which no one hears anything.

### Being Right

If you're intent on proving your point or not admitting any wrongdoing, you may end up twisting the facts, shouting, making excuses, or even arguing the opposite of what you initially said. This may confuse and upset both you and the other person.

### Derailing

If you suddenly change the subject or joke about what is being said, you're likely to weaken a speaker's trust in you and your ability to show understanding.

### Smoothing Over

If you dislike conflict or want others to like you, you may appear to be supportive but not really fully engaged in the conversation.

### Day Dreaming

If you tune out while someone's talking, drifting about in your own fantasies and thoughts, you're not likely to hear a word the other person says.



For more about communication skills, see "Find Out More About It" in sessions 7 and 19.