

Metoda™ Coaching skills

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EMCC framework – core competencies

The last issue of Coaching Skills discussed the EMCC framework and core competencies of coaching skills. The next eleven editions of Coaching skills will in turn focus on each of those eleven core competencies, starting in this issue with the subject of listening skills.

Listening skills

In every day life we are confronted with a variety of listening events, from casual, off-handed remarks to circumstances where, if you do not listen and learn, your well-being or your life may be at stake. Perhaps you can agree with me what a pleasure it is to meet a qualified listener, whether this person is a professional coach or therapist or if it is just a person who has developed their listening skills, thereby knowing how to take part in a good dialogue and how to inspire other people.

Have you heard the saying “there is no coincidence that a manager has two ears and one mouth”? The saying can be traced all the way back to the ancient Greeks, where it was published in a teaching guide on good leadership skills for young boys. It is still true – you can learn a lot by listening more and train your listening skills.

Charles Page – retired lawyer on listening

Lawyers have to listen a lot to understand people and cases they meet during their career. Charles Page is a retired lawyer, living in Caramel, USA. He recently published a book called *Listen...it will change your life* (ISBN 1-877809-96-9). It is a practical and also helpful book on how to get more out of communication. Page has had his own company, has worked with law cases and also as a manager. He has also served as a member of the boards of several organizations.

Some of his short techniques for becoming a better listener are described below.

1. Reflect on the need to listen to somebody – ask yourself: is this a listening event?

Stop for a second and ask yourself two questions:

- Do I have the time to listen right now?
- Am I distracted by other things that demand my immediate attention?

2. Decide that you want to listen and show it to the other person.

If you are distracted and don't have the time, inform the other person and decide on when you will resume the talk again. Otherwise - get ready to listen, decide that you are going to listen. Be sensitive to the mood of the other person. Your way of showing that you want to listen is important. Listening is also a relation skill.

3. Relax and focus is another recommendation at the start of the listening process. You can't be relaxed and focused all the time – life is too complicated, but you can train yourself to relax. This is important, especially if the other person is upset.

4. Identify listening barriers

Try to identify listening barriers and ask if there is another time that would be more suitable. Common listening barriers are:

- distraction, desire etc to do something else
- anxiety, embarrassment, impatience or nervousness
- attitudes, assumptions and prejudices
- lack of interest, ignorance or apathy
- preparing to respond
- too busy or don't want to listen.

Don't blame anyone for these barriers, but try to manage them. Be aware of your own listening barriers, and get rid of them. Relax and focus.

5. If needed, make summaries and use questions to show that you understand the other person or the problem discussed, or check that you are “speaking the same language”. What do the other person need?

You can read more about listening skills in Pages book, and at www.parkplace-publications.com, or in a book by another author on communication, *Förtroendefullt samarbete*, by Tamm and Luyet or “*Kommunikation för coacher*”, see www.metoda.se

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