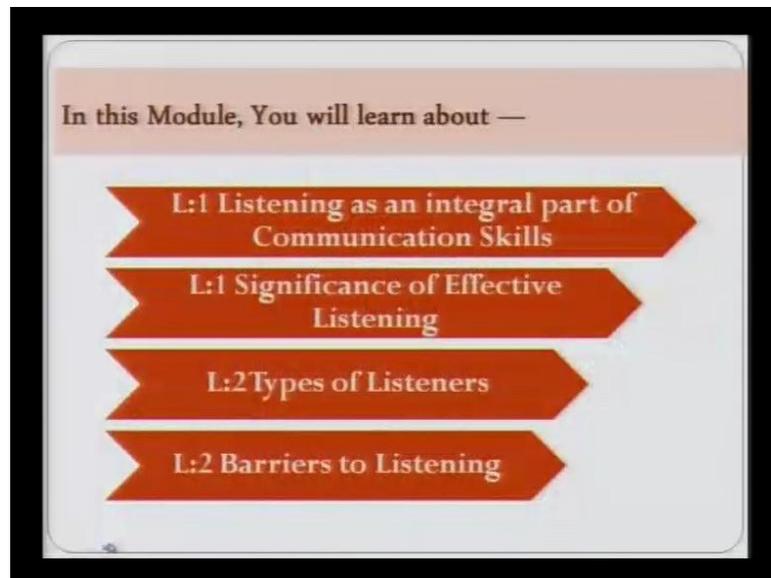


Communication Skills
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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Module #4
Lecture - 3
Listening Skills

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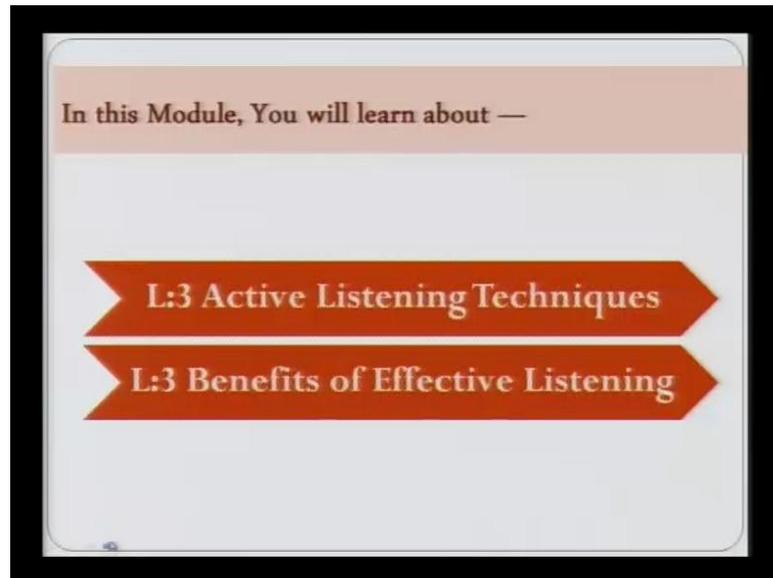
Hello. Hi. Welcome to NPTEL's course on communication skills. We are now on module number four and lecture number three. This is the third lecture series on listening skills, and this will be the concluding lecture on listening skills, on module number four. Now, what did we do in the past two lectures, just to recapitulate and sum up before I start this lecture: Overall, I said at that the beginning that in this module, you will learn about as you did in the first lecture, listening as an integral part of communication skills. I was just trying to clear some misapprehensions, misconceptions with regard to listening, which is under-estimated as a skill in comparison to speaking. So, I over emphasize rather to show that listening is equally important or much more important than even speaking. If you have to identify top two skills which are required professionally, I said that it is listening and added with speaking. So, these are the top two skills. Now, having understood these two skills as very important skills in terms of getting through group discussion, interviews

and job promotions, then I went on emphasizing how it is integral in terms of communication and even in terms of maintain human relationships.

So, if you really want to be a happy individual, one important ingredient that you should have in your personality right is that, you should be a very good, not just good, but also a effective listener. In order to make one an effective listener, in the first lecture we also talked more about the significance of effective listening. I tried to give you some illustrative examples to demonstrate that. At end of the first lecture, I also pointed out there are type of listeners, which we did it in the second lecture. Under types of listener, I was focusing on various types, such as the evaluative listener, the non listener and then, I finally tried to tell you that one should be an active listener as against the polar opposite passive listener. I said one should be an active listener.

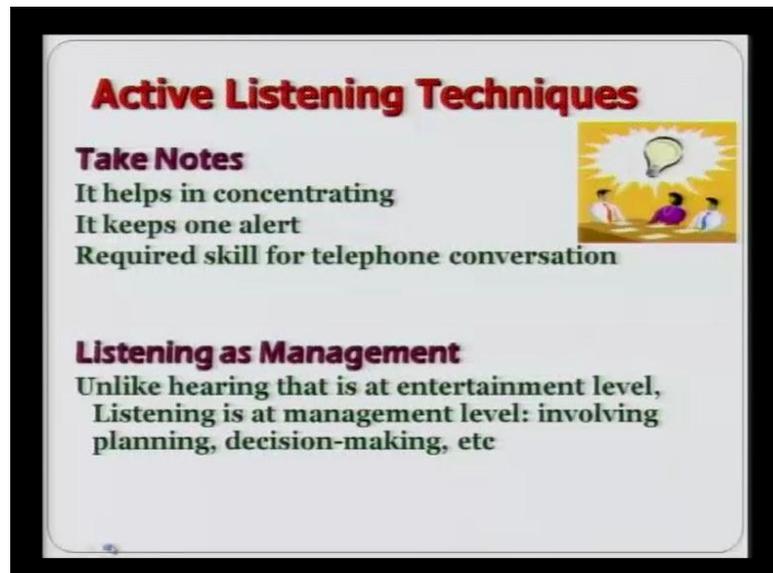
I also clarified some misconceptions related to active listening, that people generally think listening itself is a passive kind of activity and one need not expend energy and one has to listen just like that. But, I also tried to tell you that psychologist and physiologist try to analyze and understand the kind of changes that happen during active listening process and then, they try to tell us that, just like the way of the person is doing speed walking or just like the way the way of the person would do jogging, we also understand that somebody who is involved in active listening is spending energy. So, I also said that, when you think that if you are actively involved, you are likely to become tired. As I said that, it is not a negative thing compared to the benefit or the gain that you going to have once you become an active listener. Now, in that context, after classifying the types of listeners, I talked about some barriers to listening and I suggested how you should overcome the barrier, so that you reap the rewards as an effective listener. So, after talking to you about some very important barriers, I talked about 8 barriers. You should review that by going to the previous lecture. But, some of the most important ones like showing negativity towards the speaker or showing antipathy, hatred towards the speaker or being prejudiced about the speaker or the speech or getting absorbed in distractions. So, these barriers, I also suggested how one should overcome and at the end of it, I suggested that I will continue more with listening techniques as such in terms of becoming an active listener.

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So, in this lecture, so we will be particularly focusing on active listening skills followed by benefits of effective listening. So, almost the major part is on active listening techniques and then, I will continue talking about benefits of active listening, before I conclude this module.

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Let us start with some very simple active listening techniques, which are also common sense listening techniques, which are also mandatory techniques that are required in any situation like even class room situation. First of all take notes. It is a very simple and

common sense advice, whether you are in the class or in the auditorium attending to a conference or just there is a speaker who has come to give a demonstration or even if you are involved in just talking to somebody or giving an interview or you are in a group discussion kind of situation, wherever it is possible or wherever you are officially allowed to keep a note book, keep a note book and take notes. In case you are not allowed to carry long books, keep a small pocket diary or small pocket note, which you carry all the time and then, whenever you think that you should note down some important key points, note them.

Now, why is it important to take notes? First of all, as part of active listening techniques, it helps one concentrate. Personally, I always think that, I remember a lecture very well, but then, I realize later that I remember some points and not all the points and to my surprise, I find it very difficult to recollect one very important point. So, the next time what I do, I go there with the note book and take those key words or phrases that will help me to connect to the whole lecture, when I want to recall the lecture, however good my memory is.

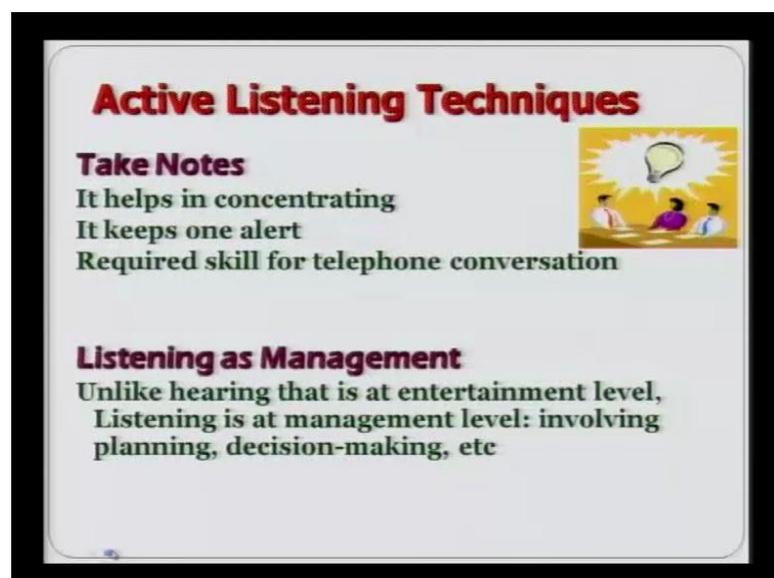
So, in that sense, on the one hand, it is helping me to concentrate because, I know that I should note down the important points. So, I listen to the speaker and at the same time, I also scan for important information and then taking notes. Noting down very important key points on the one hand, but, on the other hand, I also know that, later, whenever I want to review this lecture, whenever I want to remember what the speaker said, I always have notes at my hand. I can also revert back to the speaker once the speaker finishes it, instead of interrupting the speaker then and there. I can note down the questions that comes to my mind. Whenever he is talking, I can note it down and I can ask it at the end of the speech instead of interfering when the speech is going on.

So, notes helps in concentration. Notes help in reviewing and recording. Notes help also in maintaining certain polite decorum when the speech is going on. Overall, it keeps one alert. So, there are people who think that they can maintain the whole thing without taking notes, but then slowly they start dozing off because, they feel that the lecture is fine, but then they have nothing else to do. But, when one has to make notes, the person also realizes that the person has to be alert all the time because, any time the speaker may drop a very important idea.

Now, in a situation like telephone conversation, note taking is a very important prerequisite. Now, it can be even on a small note pad or small piece of paper, but if you want to become a professional person in terms of communicating using a telephone, you need to go there with some notes. For instance, if you are going to fix an appointment, you need to just tell exactly the date, time, venue and the day. Now, there is no point in saying that this will be on the weekend. Weekend, which date? So, you just then you say, I look at the calendar and tell you. So, suppose you say 22nd. So, 22nd, is that a Thursday or a Friday? Wait for a moment let me go and check it up. You go and check it up and then, the connection is disconnected or you are just making a very important long distance international call and then you are losing so much of your money or the company's money. More than that, from the other side, the person may all the time tell you, "Ok. Note down this number."

Now, that is a time you cannot run for a pen or run for a piece of paper, so you have your note book ready; it is at hand. Then, you note down the number. You not only note down, you also repeat and show the other person that you have noted down carefully. So, as a good listener, you are exhibiting certain skills associated with the note making that you are alert, you concentrate on the message, you are careful and you are considerate to the speaker. So, note making, although it is a very common sense kind of advice that is required as a simple basic skill, I am keeping that as a foremost skill as far as active listening techniques are concerned.

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Active Listening Techniques

Take Notes
It helps in concentrating
It keeps one alert
Required skill for telephone conversation

Listening as Management
Unlike hearing that is at entertainment level,
Listening is at management level: involving
planning, decision-making, etc

Next, understand that when you are listener, you are also performing the role of manager. Unlike, you in a situation, where you are just a hearer. Let us say you going to a concert and then, you are hearing the music. Now, you are not in a professional music college, where you are also listening to the music because you also want to learn something. Now, in a concert, you just whet there for entertainment. Just went to have some fun. So, you heard the music and then, the sound waves are getting into your system and then, it is generating lot of vibes and then you start dancing. Now, the situation where you are just hearing, that is for entertainment, but when you are actually listening as in a professional conference, when you are listening to the speaker, understand that you are at the level of management. You are functioning like a manager and doing certain things, which a manager would do such as, the whole listening skill you are involving, for instance planning. You plan beforehand. Even to take your pen, your notebook and if it is a kind of interview, even plan to go there with a tape recorder. Nowadays, if video is allowed, you also go with the camera.

So, in all these things you are planning and then, you also plan to go and be seated in the front row because, may be you feel that my audibility may be very poor if go to the back row and I want to focus more on the speaker. If I go to the back rows, I will be sometimes getting distracted with the audience who are there in the middle or the audience who are getting restless and impatient. I may be distracted. So, I do not want to sit there. So, you are planning. You are planning what you will take; where you will position yourself and how long will you listen. So, you plan that, “Ok. This speech is set for 1 hour. I am there for full 1 hour, but if the speaker exceeds, now I have another appointment. So, I have to leave at 55 minutes. I will ask somebody to record the remaining speech.” This is also part of planning. This also involves some decision making like, to do or not to do, to continue or to discontinue and whom to decide to do what.

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So, as a manager, even in listening, you are involving your managerial skills. This is different from hearing, which involves only skills related to entertainment, which are just implicit and taken for granted. Go to a concert and you just dance and come back. But, when you go to your conference, you use lot of managerial skills. So, understand that part and then be ready and be prepared. As a kind of attentive audience and would be active listener or active listener in the making, be always supportive to the speaker. Never go there with the tendency to oppose the speaker. Even if you are going to oppose in terms view points and in terms of the arguments that is generated by the speaker, make the speaker feel that you are against the ideas and not the person. You have nothing to do with the personality of the speaker. Be kind and appreciative to the speaker that you are thankful to the fact that he brought that point, but, you are not happy about the fact that the way he was logically trying to support it and then, you have different view point.

So, the difference in opinion does not matter that you are under estimating that person. You are not showing any antipathy towards that person. So, this point you should make it clear on the hand. On the other hand, when I say that be supportive to the speaker, generally go with that kind of frame of mind that you will support and make your complete body, mind and soul and put all your heart in the listening process. Now, what do I mean by this? Let the whole body language, it is not just making your mind active, but let the whole body language correlate with your thinking that you are going to listen to the speech very actively.

How can you do this? You can nod your head. You can maintain eye contact. You can give appreciative smile. You can give just appreciative glance. You can clap if the decorum permits. You can clap or you can applaud to show that that was a great point and you can just show attentively that you are making notes. So, this will all make the speaker feel important to know that he is being attended to and psychologists say that, whenever you are giving attention to the speaker, whenever the speaker feels that he is being listened to, there are people to listen to him, all ears and all eyes, the speaker delivers his best.

The same thing happens to most of the teachers. Once the teachers realize that this batch of students are doing extremely well and they are going ahead of the teachers, they have done lot of homework, they have coming to the class thoroughly prepared and then they are putting question to teacher that the teacher has to think ahead and plan ahead, they are challenging, the teacher plans better. The teacher does much more homework and the teacher feels very happy to be in such a class room, where all the students are very attentive and all are active listeners. They interfere, but gently if required. But, whenever they interfere, they are actually guiding the teacher to move ahead. So, the point I am making is, when you show that you are supporting the speaker, the speaker is actually delivering his or her best. So, it is again a win-win situation. You are helping the speaker to bring her best and she brings her best. By bringing her best, you are the one who will benefit as the audience. Especially, if it is in the class room situation, if the teacher is delivering the best lecture, it is the students who are going to be benefited. Apart from just getting the information, the students are also being motivated to run to the libraries, because the teacher motivated them so much about the subject and because the teacher was able to bring out the inner radiance and spread it to the students.

So, encourage the speaker by affirmative nods. Show the speaker that you are actually following the speaker and use facial expressions like, smile, appreciative glance etcetera. Then, this I already implied and I am making it as a point, do not interrupt the speaker. Now, some people, because of their impatience, their over enthusiasm, their curiosity or even they are not able to understand something, they interrupt the speaker. Now, basically you should not interrupt the speaker for certain practical reasons and certain polite reasons. Now, the practical reason is, when you interfere the speaker, the speakers' flow is cut. I know as a teacher when I talking on a topic, when somebody is interfering,

however interesting that interference may be, however good it may make or bring out another point, I make the other point very clearly. But, when I come back, I also understand that I missed the main point and then, I was in such a flow and I was about to say something that was there in my mind before I delivered, it was interfered. So, it was truncated. So, what happened? I deprived off my own students, my own audience of the most important point of my lecture. I got distracted because, somebody interfered very effectively. Everybody enjoyed, including me, the distracting part. But then, it destroyed, in a sense, the main thrust of the lecture.

So, do not harm the overall generative body of information by your interference. Do not harm the speakers' flow by your interference. This at the mental, intellectual and academic level. But, it also at other level shows that you are a very poor listener. You may be interfering the listener for something that he must have just said. How often it happens in the class room? A student asks something that the teacher just clarified a minute before and the teacher has to tell I just clarified. The teacher is again polite and says, 'Why do not somebody recollect and tell him this?' or the teacher herself recollects it once again and tells for the person. But, the overall flow is cut. The pace of the lecture is reduced. This, apart from showing in some cases, the audience is smart. It also shows that the audience stand point is weak. The audience, the person who is interfering particularly, possesses poor listening skills.

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Active Listening Techniques

- **Be supportive to the speaker**
Encourage the speaker by affirmative nods, and interested facial expressions
- **Do not interrupt the speaker**
It not only reveals your poor listening skills but also showcases your rude, uncultured self

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Now, it also showcases one's very rude and uncultured self. It is impolite. If somebody rudely interferes with the speaker's flow of talk, it is also showing a very uncultured behavior, which is not expected. Now, you interfere because, you are in a cozy situation and you are at a kind of elevated position, where you can interfere the person. But, that does not mean that you should do that frequently or unwarrantedly, even when it is not asked for and even you know that it is not necessary. It may be just a very bad attention seeking behavior. Like a child you just interfere and then, even without saying, "Excuse me. May I interfere?", even without using those polite marks, somebody directly asks or cuts across and puts a question, which is rude and impolite. For the reasons that I have explain, its cutting the intellectual flow, but at the same time, it is also making the person lose his control over other audience. But, you may gain some attention seeking behavior. But, it also shows that you are not that cultured. So, keep that in mind. Do not interrupt or interfere the speaker's flow of thoughts.

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To continue with more on active listening techniques, do not change the topic. Now, if you are not interested in the topic, it may happen that sooner or later, you develop interest, when the topic is moving from one level to another. Just because you know the fundamental basic level, do not divert or do not change the topic because, the speaker has planned something. By changing the topic, you are making the speaker insecure and you are making the speaker say something that is irrelevant, that might be of interest to you, but not to the whole audience for whom he has actually come prepared for. So, do not

change the topic and do not seek self attention in any manner apart from interfering. So, in any manner do not try to seek self attention. You can do this even by coughing or even by just getting up, going out and coming back frequently. So, you can do this in so many verbal and non verbal manners, but do not seek self attention. It is again not a good behavior.

Do not dismiss the topic. So, let say in an open situation, somebody is asking, “Shall I discuss on this topic immediately?” You say that it is nonsense and how many times you will talk on the same topic or how many times will I listen to this topic? Stop that nonsense. Do not dismiss the topic, even before the topic is being discussed with you. Do not do that and avoid multitasking. So, what some of us do, some of us, even in terms of mobile, the people who are use 3 mobiles, 4 mobiles or 5 sim cards. Nowadays, it is fashionable to have mobile that can have 6 sim cards and then, they advertise it as sim card memory and you can use two slots simultaneously. What happens? There is a point where both mobile phones are calling seeking the attention of the speaker and then, in case he has 3 or 4 mobiles at hand, there is a point all the mobiles are ringing and there is the land line and then, there is somebody who is come from courier seeking his signature and then the person is also reading a book and the person is also listening to this one and the person also needs to give some important instructions to his subordinate.

Now, multitasking. Although, one thing that I can be very efficient in multitasking and I can do wonderful things; in practice, it is not possible. Always the person who is in multitasking, he is saving time, but then, there is some kind of compromise in terms of efficiency and in terms of accuracy, especially in terms of listening skills, multitasking is not an advised one. One should switch off one’s mobile, cut of the land line connection or put that in a silent mode, put it in mute, close the door, if you are listening to your personal conversation or if it is a small group discussion, just shut the door and before you do that, put a notice outside that important conversation and do not disturb till 12 o clock or till 12.30. So, shut all kinds of distraction as much as possible.

Now, when I say this, once the outside door and everything has been taken care, mobile, other gadget, even if you have a laptop in which the email announcement comes or the instant messaging buzzer comes, sound comes, put that in a silent mode or just remove that kind of announcing sounds. Now, once you do all these things externally, you should also take care of the internal multitasking. When I say multitasking, I am talking about the

external as well as the internal. The external one is using all these kind of gadgets and then indulging in so many conversations at same time. But, internal one is listening to the person, but at the same time mentally preparing what shall I do for tomorrow's talk; so what about that meeting; what did my wife ask me to buy; forgot that; oh where is that list and then, looking for that list, that is internal multitasking. So, that also should be avoided. When I say that multitasking think of both external as well as internal and avoid.

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Active Listening Techniques

Ask Questions
To make sure what the speaker is saying;
You also connect to the speaker

Ask Open Questions
DON'T ask YES or NO questions
E.g: Don't Ask, "Has this been going on for ten years?"
Ask, "How long has this been going on"—you facilitate the speaker elaborate on the topic.

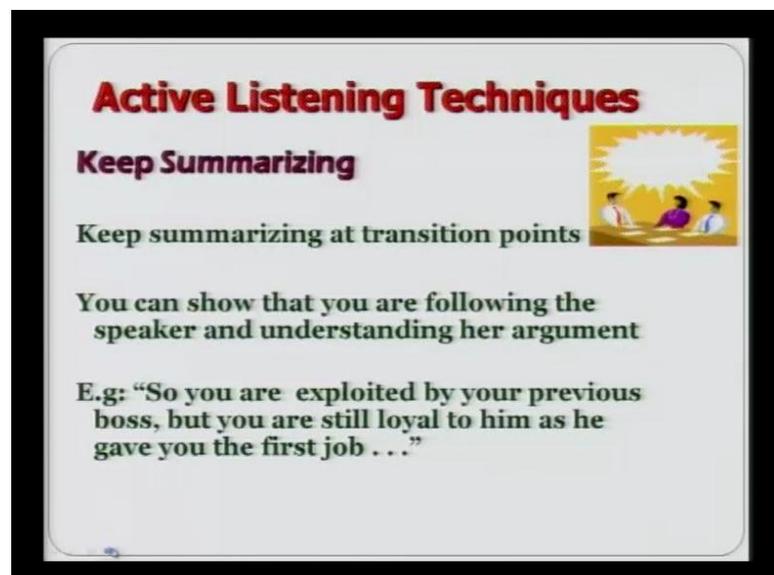
Then, as the speech proceeds in, order to show that you are an active listener, ask questions. I have put two techniques. First one, I am saying that ask questions and second is, I say ask open questions. Now, why do I differentiate? First of all, I am saying that ask questions. Many people do not ask questions at all. They sit idly even when they have to ask questions. Even when the speaker says that, "If you have any questions, doubts, clarifications, please ask me." Even at that point, people do not ask questions. Now, same thing happens in class room situations. The teacher at the end of the class keeps 5 minutes or 10 minutes for clarifications or doubts, in which he wants the students to ask questions. Some classes they do. In some other classes, they just keep quite.

Now, that does not mean that they do not have any questions. Of course there are some students who are seething within, boiling within to ask such questions. It is the barrier that they have in mind. Fear of humiliation, shyness, hesitance, which is clogging their mind and it is not letting them to speak out. Once the teacher leaves, they regret so much. So,

learn to ask questions. Now, in asking questions, what are you doing? You making sure what the speaker is saying and then, the speaker also feels connected or rather you are also trying to show that you are connecting to the speaker. Is that what you mean, when you are asking the speaker, so if the speaker said “Yes! Exactly that is what I mean” or “That is not what I mean. What I mean is this.” So, then you say, “Oh, of course I understand.” Now, you are trying to connect to the speaker when you are asking questions.

Now, when you ask questions, do not ask closed questions. Ask open questions. This means do not ask yes or no questions. For instance, do not ask, has this been going on for 10 years? Has this been going on for 20 years? The person will say yes or no. He will say yes or no and then, he will clarify. Now, instead of that, make it open. You can ask the person, how long has this been going on? Now, by doing this, what do you do? You actually facilitate the speaker to elaborate more on this topic. So, ask open questions. Do not put closed questions, which is elicit only monosyllabic answers as yes or no or just concluding it in a single word or phrase. So, do not do that.

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Active Listening Techniques

Keep Summarizing

Keep summarizing at transition points 

You can show that you are following the speaker and understanding her argument

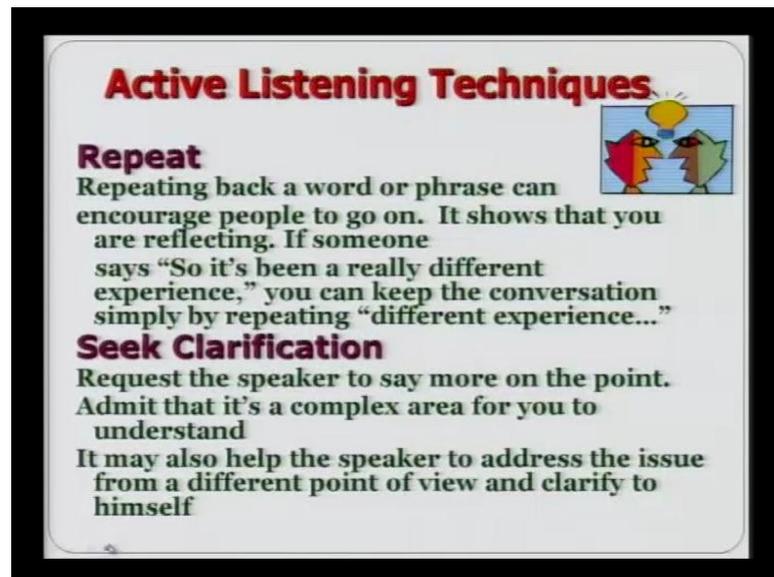
E.g: “So you are exploited by your previous boss, but you are still loyal to him as he gave you the first job . . .”

The next important active listening technique is summarizing. Now, keep summarizing then and there. You will identify that, when a speaker is speaking to you, there are moments when the speaker is getting stuck or the moment the speaker is grasping for some more words or the moment the speaker is not sure whether you had followed. The

speaker will indicate that by a pause or by a meaningful glance to you. This is the time you seize the moment or the opportunity and then, you summarize. These are transition points. These are points in which you are moving from one level to another. Just quickly summarize, “oh, that is what you are talking about so far and I think you would like to speak more on this.” So, by doing this, you show the speaker that you are following him or her and you are understanding the speaker’s argument and you taking the speaker’s perspective. You are able to follow that much.

So, for instance, let us say that one of your close friends is talking about the job situation. She was in a previous job and then, she has left the job and then, she has gone to another one. Now, she underwent some traumatic situation in the previous one and she is gone to the new one. But then, there certain other emotional applications and attachments and she is explaining. So, at one point you pause and she is also groping for words and then, he tells her, “So you are exploited by your previous boss, but still, you were loyal to him as he give you the first job.” “Ya, exactly, that is what I mean. That is what I am trying to tell you.” So, see the kind of conflict, emotion conflict that I am having. Still I am not able to cut off from the previous one, but then not able to relate to the present one, although the present one is also giving me better environment, work environment and I am not exploited, getting better paid, but somehow I still psychologically feel I am loyal to the previous boss. So, you put that right. So, good. Now, summarizing, it also helps in taking the speaker from one level to another and it saves time and minimizes repetitions when you do that and you are connecting and you making the person feel wanted and understood etcetera.

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Active Listening Techniques

Repeat
Repeating back a word or phrase can encourage people to go on. It shows that you are reflecting. If someone says "So it's been a really different experience," you can keep the conversation simply by repeating "different experience..."

Seek Clarification
Request the speaker to say more on the point. Admit that it's a complex area for you to understand
It may also help the speaker to address the issue from a different point of view and clarify to himself



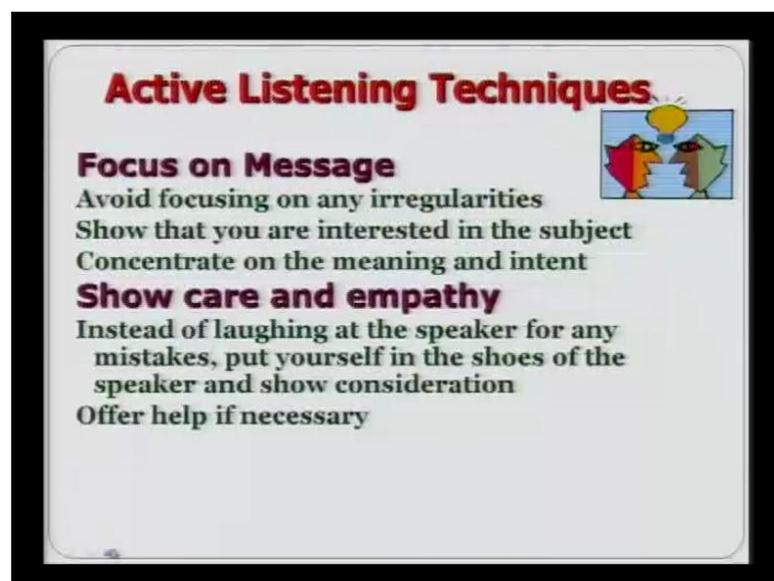
What else you can do in terms of active listening techniques? Repeat; now, when you repeat back a word or phrase along with the person, you are helping that person as well as you reflect or ponder over the ideas and thoughts. So, what you can do? You can just, when the person is saying something, you can just repeat the last two words or last one word to indicate that you are encouraging the person to speak further. So, for instance, if the person says, "So it has been really a different experience." Now, you can just simply repeat by saying "Yeah, different experience altogether." Yeah. It is a different experience", the person continues and try to say why it is different. Or, even you can just simply repeat the word "experience". "Yeah, it was totally a new experience. Different from what I had experienced before." Or, even you can just say "different". "Ah, yes, it is different because, I never had such a kind of experience." So, you are just making the person elaborate. You also reflect on that thought. You make the other person reflect and continue, clarify and make that communication process go on and complete.

When you do this, you also try to seek clarification. Now, there is a difference between asking questions and seeking clarification. Sometimes, you may seek clarification by asking questions. But, when you seek clarification, basically you are trying to admit that the idea is complex. You are not able to understand and then, you request this speaker to say more on the points. Now, when a point is illustrated, sometimes the speaker thinks the speaker is able to make it clear to all. It is only when somebody is seeking clarification, the person understands, I need to give some other examples. I need to illustrate or I need

to look at it from different angle, so that the person can understand this. So, you will find that good teachers, good speakers will approach the same issue through three or four different angles or they will give different illustrations or examples. So, when you seek clarification, you are also making the speaker make herself much more clearer to the larger part of audience, who would have missed certain points, bur for your clarification seeking behavior.

So, seek clarification. So help the speaker to clarify the same issue through a different point. Now, interestingly you also make the speaker clarify that to himself or herself. Sometimes you ask something and there is some very interesting speakers who spontaneously tell that, “Oh, I never thought about that. Even that point is not clear to me. So, now that you have to asked, it should like that or let me look it up and then, come and discuss that with you tomorrow.” The next day the person is more vibrant and then, comes and tells how it should be looked at. So, you are also making the speaker clarify. Otherwise, the speaker would think that everything is understood by the audience. So, again you are making the communication effective from both sides and contribute to further win-win situation.

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Then, as an active listener, focus on message. Remember I said that one prejudices oneself by looking at the appearance of the speaker. The speaker looks ugly. I do not like to look at the face of the speaker. The speaker is not wearing good dress. The speaker is

not shaved off. I do not like the speaker with the beard and so on. Now, cut of these things and then, focus on message, because you will find that most of the eminent speakers and scientist, they do not have time for cosmetic touches at their appearance. They are at the hard inner core. They touch your heart and soul and then, they will change your attitude. They will change your thinking pattern. A new schema will be created, if you are involving yourself in the speech. Now, if that is the thing, do not focus on any irregularities. May the shoes are not tied properly or the button is off. So, any kind of irregularity, do not focus on those things. Focus on the content. Show that you are very much interested in the subject and not the irregularities of the person.

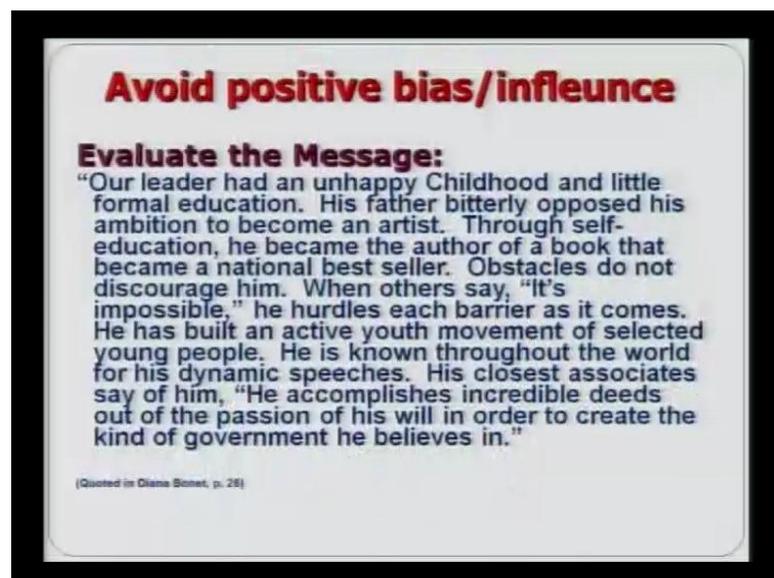
Concentrate on the meaning and the intent, the purpose, the good intention in which the speaker is trying to share that information with you. Show care and empathy. Show that you care for the speaker and show that you are feeling into some of the feelings of the speaker. Now, suppose the speaker makes a mistake, which is quite natural. May be the speaker misplaces the transparency or the speaker does not how to move from one power point slide to another one. Very simple basic things. Instead of setting on the front row and then, just laughing at the speaker and making fun or telling your friend, “Oh, this speaker even does not know these things. It such a simple thing.” Instead of doing that, put yourself into the shoes of the other person and then, show consideration and empathize and offer help or even instead of asking, you just volunteer.

I remember a situation, where a friend of mine who became my best friend later, but that was the first time I met the person in the conference and this person was using these transparencies. Then, due to the speed of the fan, some of the transparency started flying off. So, I was just there on the front one. I could have just waited for him to come and pick it up, but I could see that he was little nervous because, the time given, he was almost exceeding the time. So, I just offered myself without expecting formally that the speaker would ask me to do. Just collected the transparencies and then, put them in order and gave it to the person and then, he continued. So, he was quite appreciative later during the lunch that I could do this for him. Then, that established some kind of trust and rapport and then generated a new friendship. So, I am not saying that all these things will end up in happy friendship, but at least as an audience, if you are able to show consideration and empathy, it is showing that you are a very active listener.

So, I will continue more on these listening techniques and then, I will also try to give you some illustrative examples like, how to become an effective listener. If you remember, at the beginning of this module, in the first lecture, I told you that you should stop having any kind of prejudice against a speaker or against a personality just by the way you hear about certain things. The example, illustrative example given was about Beethoven and then, you were given all negative things and then, you were almost forced to conclude that the child should be aborted because, the parents were not well and all that. Now, that kind of thing can generate and negativity and cause prejudice. But, you should also be cautious. When you want to become an effective listener and active listener, you should also be cautious about positive bias.

Now, today you are surrounded by media. You are surrounded by lot of information that is bombarding you, that information flow. So, you should be able to evaluate whether that information coming to you is right or wrong and worst of all, today, medium has become message. That is, what it tells is what you believe. Now, the way they show certain things can be horrifying or can be very comforting. So, the angle they select, the clips they decide to show can have a very powerful positive or negative influence in your thinking. Now, that you should be wary off. Should you let somebody thinking influence over you? So, that you keep in mind and then, let us look at a message.

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Avoid positive bias/influence

Evaluate the Message:

“Our leader had an unhappy Childhood and little formal education. His father bitterly opposed his ambition to become an artist. Through self-education, he became the author of a book that became a national best seller. Obstacles do not discourage him. When others say, “It’s impossible,” he hurdles each barrier as it comes. He has built an active youth movement of selected young people. He is known throughout the world for his dynamic speeches. His closest associates say of him, “He accomplishes incredible deeds out of the passion of his will in order to create the kind of government he believes in.”

(Quoted in Diana Stone, p. 28)

Now, this message, you see you are feeling after I read the message. You also follow me when I am reading this and see how it is influencing in your thinking. This is a message about a leader. Let me read this. “Our leader had an unhappy childhood and little formal education. His father bitterly opposed his ambition to become an artist.” So, even the father was not supportive. “Through self education”, so he is a self made man. This is something that we should appreciate. “ He became the author of the book that became a national best seller.” So, it is not that is easy to write a best seller and he had written a best seller. “Obstacles do not discourage him.” As against the normal human beings, we will be stuck with the obstacles.

“When others say, “it is impossible”, he hurdles each barrier as it comes. So, he enjoys over coming instead of succumbing to obstacles. “He has built an active youth movement of selected young people.” So, he his dynamic and he is able to motivate young people, which is again a very important quality of a leader. “He was known throughout the world for his dynamic speeches.” So, he is a powerful orator as well, which is another important ingredient for a leader. “His closest associates say of him, his intimate friends, administrative friends, they tell him, they say, “ he accomplishes incredible deeds out of the passion of his will, in order to create the kind of government he believes in. So, he is able to create the government. He is able to change the government. He is able to make people believe in his own government. Now, when you listen to all these things, you generally tend to feel that, “oh, such a great personality. Positive frame of mind; able to hold a charisma against all odds; has emerged as a great author; has become a dynamic personality in terms of including and influencing young minds. Not only that, he is able to hold control over of the whole people of a state; he is able to change the governance. Now, will we not think that we should worship such a personality? Such an eminent personality. Obviously yes.

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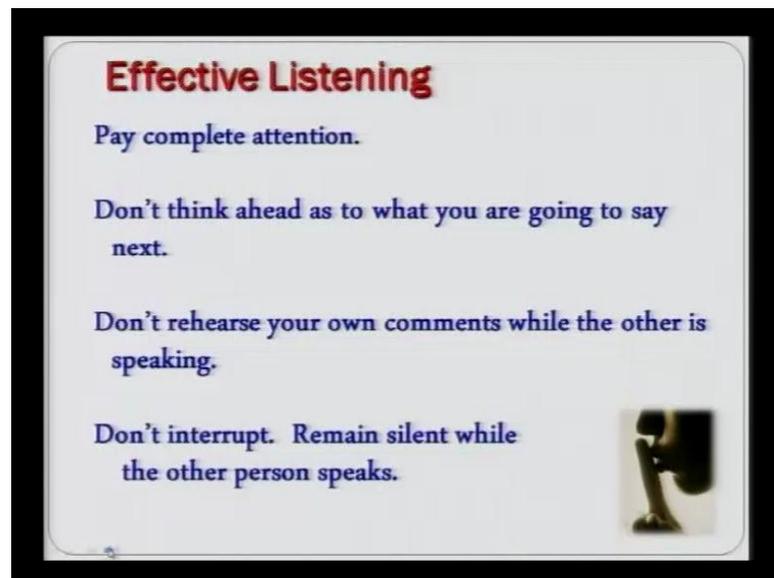
But, who was the author thinking of? Whom did he refer to about this great personality? You will be surprised to know that the famous personality that the author is referring to is none other than Adolf Hitler. Now, you can obviously see that, that is a very euphemistic eulogy on Hitler looking at one dimension of the personality and completely ignoring another dimension that terrified the whole world, the dimension of his dictatorship. Yeah, he is a good orator, no doubt. But then, he also believed in a policy in which he thought that, if you tell a lie ten times, then it becomes the truth. So, the political propaganda, he believed that if he could say that repeatedly with force, with emphasis, you can change, influence, and corrupt the mind of the people.

Now what I am trying to conclude in this is that, when I say that you should become an active listener, you should also add this evaluative and critical part in your thinking, when you are becoming an active listener. Only then you are becoming an effective listener. So, you may be alert; you may be attending to the speaker and getting all the information. Now, in this case, the speaker wanted you to take Hitler as a positive personality and as a very model of a leader whom you should emulate. But, he did not project the negative aspects of the same personality. So, when you evaluate, you look at the pros and cons. You look at the good side and bad side of the person.

When somebody is exaggerating something, you also tend to realize that this is just exaggeration and there may be some other facts. Look for some facts. Sometimes, even a

single small fact can over throw so many things and can falsify lot of stories, myths, built around something. So, look for that small evidence, that foot note, side note, that hint. So, that will make you understand things without even positive bias. At the beginning of the module, I cautioned you of forming prejudice, which is negative. But, you should be equally wary off, especially nowadays in the technological advancement by media that is influencing our thinking. You should be aware of this kind of idea influencing thinking also.

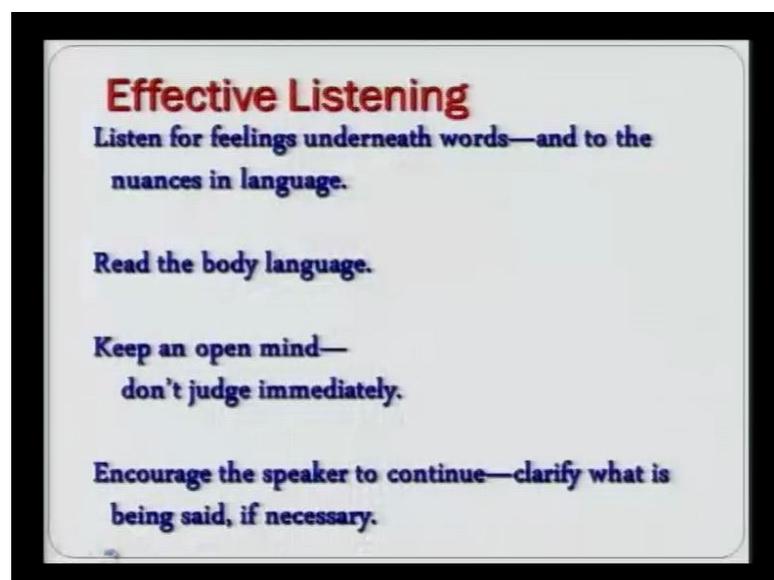
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Now, once you are cautious about this, let me give more tips about effective listening overall and then, while concluding, I will talk about the benefits of listening. Now, to become an effective listener, just to reemphasis some points, pay complete attention. Be devoted. So, do not get distracted. Avoid all negative thinking when you are there. Do not think ahead as to what you going to say next. Especially if you happen to be the speaker, if you happen to ask some questions, listen to the speaker first. The questions will generate themselves. So, you do not have to think when the speaker is telling you something. So, that is why again you getting distracted. Do not rehearse your own comments when the other is speaking. Do not think what you will be doing when the speaker finishes. Do not do that. Stop that kind of thinking. Do not interrupt. I repeat to say this, do not interrupt, but, remain silent while the other person speaks. It does not show off your personality if you interrupt very often. But, remaining clam and silent, you are showing that you have polite, courteous behavior. So, show that and do it.

Listen for feelings underneath words and to the nuances in language. Listen for feelings underneath words and to the nuances in language. So, look for the subtext. Do not take the words literally, but, look for that subtle meaning. When somebody says something look for the actual inner meaning. Identify why the person is saying that thing and you actually you get into the core of the meaning. Read the body language. Is the person nervous? Is the person excited? Is the person correlating certain ideas by using body language? Read it. Keep an open mind. I said at the beginning, the mind is like a parachute. So, it functions only when it is open.

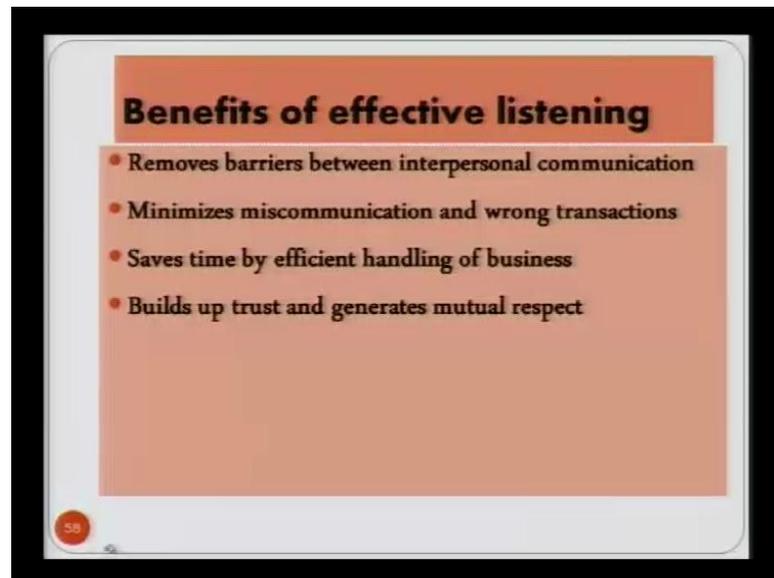
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So, keep the mind open and do not judge immediately. Do not make any judgment. Wait for the speaker to conclude. Let the speaker have the last word. You do not interfere and you do not form judgments. Encourage the speaker to continue. Even if, suppose somebody is interrupting the talk, snubbing the speaker and the speaker is completely caught unawares and the speaker is feeling embarrassed, you may just pacify this kind of unrest among the audience and still encourage the speaker to continue with the talk. Then, you can clarify what is being said. If some part of the audience is becoming restless, you can just even just clarify what the speaker is trying to tell in a different manner. Then, again tell the speaker to continue and then, be supportive. Especially, if necessary, this kind of interference are welcome to show that you are supporting the speaker. Not that you are inimical to audience, you are actually part of them. But, you do not want to the speaker feel that he or she is let down by one rude group of audience. So, that you do not

want to do because, your company's image, your institutional image is also tagged with the kind of audience behavior, especially, when the guest speaker is coming from a very highly esteemed organization.

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Now, as a concluding thought, as a concluding remark, let me talk about some benefits of effective listening. In today's materialistic world, we always want to know, what is it there for me? If I do this, what will I get? You are saying that I should become an active listener, so at the end of it, what will I get? What are the benefits? Now, I can count so many benefits, but here are some apart from making you very effective communicator. Let us look at some of the basic benefits. Basically, it removes barriers between interpersonal communications. That is barriers between one to one relationship and barriers between communications between one group to another group. So, the barriers are removed. Most of the times, one person is unhappy with the other person because, often we hear this person. It may be wife; it may be subordinate saying that, "oh, my husband never listens", "my manager never listens". So, you tell your another friend, "can we just raise this point and then make the head do this for us." So, the person says, "Can you really convince the head about this? Can you really make the head think what we are thinking? Is that easy? Can we really take this to the manager?" Why because the manager is a poor listener.

Now, you happen to be the manager or head, understand this situation and if you are interested in effective listening and if you practice active listening, it will automatically remove this barrier. Instead of you talking, allow the people to talk. That itself will resolve the issue. Another benefit of effective listening, it minimizes miscommunication and wrong transactions. So, I will, just while concluding, I will give some examples, but, understand that in most of business transactions, miscommunication takes place, just because a person is not able to listen properly at the other side and wrong business transactions are happening. It saves so much time because, the business is handled efficiently. Whatever is said, the other person listens carefully and does not make a mistake and then does the things accurately. It adds to efficiency. Thereby it also builds up trust and generates mutual respect. In terms of company, it also generates good will.

The customers get a feeling that we are always listened too. There is not a single instance where our compliance was ignored. Even our suggestions were taken care. So, we are part of the decision making process. They listen to. They listen to us. So, it builds trust and apart from building trust, it generates respect. Respect for the speaker and the speaker developing respect for the audience, the receiver part of communication and then, it generates mutual respect and again when there is mutual respect, there is positive environment for good communication. There is more business, healthy attitude promoting from both sides and then, there is overall kind of happiness generating in communication climate.

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There are other benefits of effective listening. Sometimes, effective listening, listening as such is used to calm down, comfort and soothe people. I have seen a manager dealing with people who are on strike. What the manager does? When the person comes running and they are shouting slogans, he just calls two three of you, come and we will have a discussion. This two three people come and then, he just sits down and then says, "Which drink would you like to have? Tea or some cool drink?" They are already furious. They say, "No, we will not have anything." "Ok, at least drink water." Now, what he is doing first is, trying to assess their need and listening to them. So, at least he gives water or something. While they drink, he tells, "What is your problem?" Now, when they say this, he does not interfere at all. Just listens. So, it calms down, that finally the manager has listened to us. Whereas, we could not go to the lower level people and they were not listening. So, it will help people calm down. There are situations when we comfort and soothe people just be listening. Especially in tragic situations, somebody lost the beloved. A young child lost in an accident. Talking to the mother it is very traumatic, but, the mother needs to talk to somebody, somebody who would listen to her sensibly. So, in that situation, you are comforting and soothing the person.

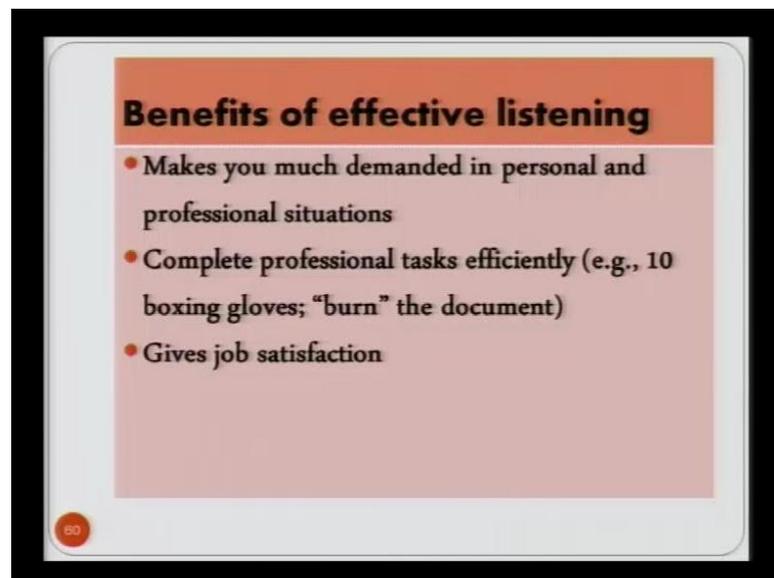
Now, in all these things, what it does further is that it develops confidence and self esteem. The moment the person knows that I am good at listening and people appreciate my listening skills, automatically it generates confidence and communication and it generates one's self esteem. The person feels good about himself. He knows that I am a good listener and people like me because, I am a good listener. I will become an effective listener by listening more to people. It also facilitates productivity and accuracy in terms of organizational set up because, you do not make any mistake. You listen, talk less and focus more on work.

In therapeutic relations also it is very helpful. Therapeutic relations like counselors, psychologists, even doctors, if you look at what they are actually doing or what is that skill that is distinguishing some of the doctors and some of this councilors is that, they very effective listeners. The patience listeners; active listeners. They listen to the worries, problems of the patients and give sensible attention to them. So, that makes the patient feels comfortable. Things which you cannot tell at home, things which you cannot share with your friends, you are able to tell to the councilor or you are able to tell your family

doctor. What the person does is just giving time and listening to you. So, that is functioning as a kind of remedy or it is a kind of therapy. So, even it helps there.

Even certain religious practices, just like the doctor, psychologist in modern days, so from time immemorial, the religious practice have their own priest or their own magicians or there are bishops and other people whom people go and talk. So, there is this father in the church whom people go and confess. The father asks very pointed questions, but most of the time the other person who is talking. Not the father who is listening to this person. So, even some of the religious practices are kept in track because, the religious heads are very good listeners. They listen to the problems and even by listening, they are actually sorting out the problems. Often, the person who is troubled, the person who is in conflict, realizes that while talking to somebody itself, the person is able to resolve one's own problems. So, all that the person needed was somebody who is a good listener. The listener just listened and then, he asked "what you think you should do?" So, the person says, "I should be doing this. I should be doing that. Oh, I think this is the thing I should do. Thank you so much." But, actually the listener did nothing. It is the person who thought of it everything on his own.

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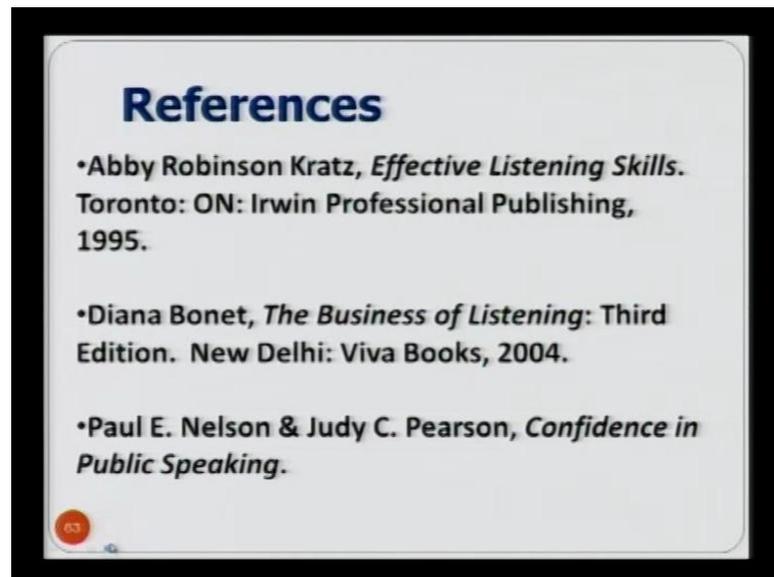
Overall, once you become an active listener, it makes you much demanded, either in personal or professional or in both situations. Always people want to talk to you. Always people come to you with their problems and you do not have the magic to solve their

problems, but, you are a good listener. That itself is enough for them. Now, you are able to complete professional tasks efficiently. Remember two examples that I gave at the beginning of the lecture on communication. So, a person on phone orders for 10 boxing gloves. But, the person at the other side, who was a poor listener and then, he sent 10 boxes of gloves. What you wanted was 10 boxing gloves, which are different and used for boxing. But, this fellow sent 10 boxes gloves. So, there are about 100 gloves, which can be used in winter or while driving, but they are different types. So, total miscommunication, damage in terms of productivity, loss for the company, unhappiness, anger, mutual suspicion and so on.

Also, remember the example I gave about burning the documents. Somebody asked the subordinate to just go and get the legal document burnt. In the sense, he said, "can you burn this for me?" What he meant was, you just make a copy of it. Make a photocopy. Now, the other person understood that as literal burning. He burnt a copy that is kept for 200 300 years. Obviously, the person was fired off. Now, if the person was an effective listener, the person could have asked, "Do you mean to say that?" That is asking and seeking clarification, "do you meant to say that I should burn this?" "No, no. I mean to say you should take a photocopy." So, just because the person did not have that basic listening skills, the person lost a very lucrative job. Overall, it also gives job satisfaction in professional environment. When you realize that you are doing that job accurately, you are able to do that efficiently and people are looking forward to you doing that job, you negotiating in that situation, you going and giving that presentation about your company, first they think that you are the one who is doing good justice, just because of the fact that you are a effective listener.

Overall, it contributes to the fact that, you become a very efficient and good communicator and people are quite happy about keeping you, whether it is a job environment or it is a family situation and then, like as the end of the fairytale, you start living happily ever after. So, become an efficient listener and reap rich benefits and rewards. So, with this note I will conclude this lecture. Just at the concluding point, leave this thinking. See more. Be all eyes. Hear more. Be all ears, but, speak less and if at all you have to speak, speak, but speak less and thank you so much for listening.

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Just quick references. There is a book on effective listening skills, if you want to develop this further. I have given major tips and look at this. This also a professional book dealing with the listening as a kind of business skill, *The Business of Listening*. So, you can also refer to this and also the book I referred to before, *Confidence in Public Speaking*, also has a wonderful section on listening as such. So, thank you so much once again. We will meet again on the next module on communication skills.

Thank you.