

Being an Effective Listener and Skilled Speaker

Adaped from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/attention-couples-becoming-a-skilled-listener-and-effective-speaker/0006224?all=1>

Becoming a better listener:

Listen to the entire conversation – instead of building your case against them while they're talking. Listen for how you agree with them.

Use body language to show you're listening – give eye contact and lean toward your partner

Ditch the distractions – turn off your phone and computer

Empathize – the practice of empathy is about your intention to hear and understand your partner and feel with them what their experience is

Paraphrase how your partner feels – check out your perceptions about how they're feeling by guessing and asking

Paraphrase what your partner said – then say what parts you agree with and add your own thoughts

Becoming a more effective speaker:

Pick the right time – timing is everything. Choose a time when you're calm and have some clarity. If it's hard to make time to talk, schedule it or even set a time limit

Stick to one issue – pick a topic and focus on one thing

Validate your partner's feelings and perspective – acknowledge your understanding of where they're coming from (or ask!)

Use "I" statements—own your own feelings and experience. When you say "you" it puts your partner on the defensive.

Avoid "always" and "never" – these can come across as hopeless and critical

Use X, Y, Z statements – when you do X in situation Y, I feel Z. X should be a specific, objective, observable behavior without judgment attached.

Feeling words should follow "I feel" – when you say "I feel like you" it's usually a judgment, not a feeling.