

# TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GOOD LISTENING

## LISTENING IS FUN - HOW WELL CAN YOU LISTEN?

Nature gave man two ears but only one tongue, which is a gentle hint that he should listen more than he talks. You can listen faster than anyone can talk. Speech rate is about 100 to 150 words per minute; thinking is about 500 words per minute.

### 1. **STOP TALKING!**

- ❖ You cannot listen if you are talking.
- ❖ Polonius (Hamlet): "Give every man thine ear, but few they voice."

### 2. **PUT THE TALKER AT EASE**

- ❖ Act like a good listener.
- ❖ Be alert and let your face radiate interest.
- ❖ Help the speaker feel that he is free to talk.

### 3. **SHOW HIM THAT YOU WANT TO LISTEN**

- ❖ Look and act interested. Do not read while he talks.
- ❖ Listen to understand. Do not listen just for the sake of listening.
- ❖ Look at the speaker. Face, mouth, eyes, hands, will help the speaker communicate with you. Also helps you concentrate and shows that you are listening.
- ❖ Make the speaker feel important - applaud with nods, smiles, comments and encouragements.

### 4. **REMOVE DISTRACTIONS**

- ❖ Do not tap pencils, doodle, or shuffle papers.
- ❖ Close doors, turn off radios, TV or other distractions.
- ❖ Try to push your worries, fears, and problems away. They may distract you from listening well.

### 5. **EMPATHIZE WITH THE SPEAKER**

- ❖ Try to put yourself in the other's place so that you can see his point of view.
- ❖ Concentrate on what is being said and focus your attention on the words, the ideas, and the feelings related to the subject.

### 6. **BE PATIENT**

- ❖ Allow the speaker plenty of time. Do not interrupt.
- ❖ Do not start for the door, walk away or start other small tasks.

### 7. **HOLD YOUR TEMPER**

- ❖ An angry man gets the wrong meaning from words. Avoid hasty judgments. Listen to the whole story.

### 8. **GO EASY ON ARGUMENTS AND CRITICISM**

- ❖ This puts him on the defensive. He may "clam up" or get angry.
- ❖ Do not antagonize the speaker lest he conceal ideas, emotions, attitudes and facts. Adapt to the speaker. Do not argue, even if you win - you lose.

### 9. **ASK QUESTIONS**

- ❖ This encourages him and shows you are listening.
- ❖ It helps to develop points further.
- ❖ Ask questions for clarifications, but don't ask questions that will embarrass or "put down" the speaker.

### 10. **STOP TALKING!**

- ❖ This is the first and last, because all other commandments depend on it. You just cannot do a good listening job while you are talking.

Adapted from United Square Dancers of America Handout:  
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