

# Ten Tips to Improve Your Listening Skills

## 1. Stay Focused

Don't let yourself get distracted with your phone, environment, or anything else that doesn't directly involve supporting the coachee.

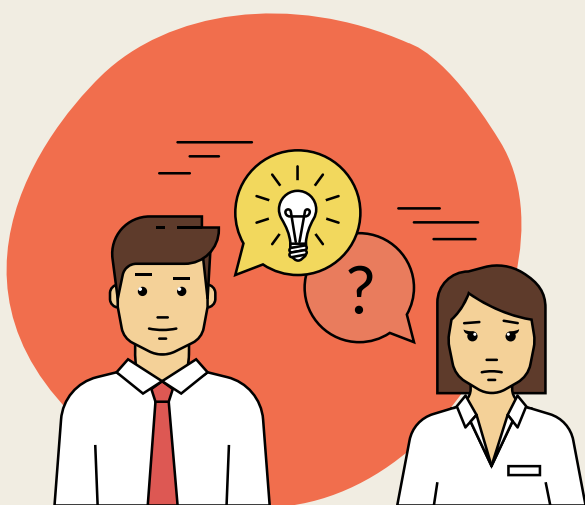


## 2. Detect Emotions

Listen to verbal cues the coachee gives you regarding their mood and emotions. Listen for their tone and context clues in their words. Do their words match their tone?

## 3. Ask Questions

Don't just take the coachee's words at face value. Ask probing questions like "When did this start?" to get to the heart of the matter.



## 4. Don't Interrupt

Listen fully to what the coachee is saying- don't interrupt or wait patiently for your turn to speak. Listen to understand.

## 5. Don't Pre-Empt

Don't assume what the coachee is going to say or that you know what the coachee needs until you hear the full story.

## 6. Recap Key Facts

Summarize and reflect back to clarify your understanding. Statements such as "What I'm hearing is..." and "It sounds like you're saying..." are good examples.



## 7. Pen and Paper at the Ready

Get into the habit of making short quick references to any questions you want to ask or points you want to raise or comment on. Sticky notes, OneNote, or other note-taking app will work. Recording your coaching sessions (with permission) is also a good idea!



## 8. Say it Again

If you're having difficult listening, make the necessary adjustments. You might say "I'm sorry, I missed that last point. Could you kindly repeat that for me?"



## 9. Watch the Stereotypes

Avoid stereotyping people by making assumptions about how you expect them to act and what you expect them to say. This will bias your listening. Remember that each coachee is different and it is poor coaching practice to assume one solution will work for all coachees.

## 10. Be Aware of the Barriers to Listening

Common barriers that may keep you from listening properly are:

- You think you're right, and the coachee is wrong.
- You feel you have to provide help right away.
- You prefer to talk rather than listen.
- You are waiting for gaps or pauses to jump in with your response.
- You are trying to be a mind reader.
- You are sympathizing rather than empathizing.