

Barriers to Listening

Let's look at some things that keep us from communicating clearly.

Assuming subject/person is unimportant

- Mentally criticizing speaker's delivery: Can you believe she is using that old tired boring approach instead of thinking, hmmm...I wonder what new thing might be learned here?
- Getting over-stimulated when questioning an idea.
- Listening only for facts-skipping details or not seeing evidence of emotions theirs or ours.
- Pretending to be attentive (but you are really on to your next meeting, planning dinner or simply checked out)
- Outlining everything on paper (writing or typing the content) giving no eye contact or asking a question to show you understand. People who are very intelligent or knowledgeable may fall into this trap, assuming they know the message without checking things out.
- Letting the speaker be inaudible—Thinking that is his problem if he can't speak up.
- Avoiding technical messages this was always my problem. I felt that I was not very "technologically oriented" so I just checked out whenever anyone talked about technology. Now I am pretty interested and see I can learn all kinds of things that I never realized I could learn.
- Overreacting to certain words and phrases—"I can get hot headed, because after all: I'm Italian, black, Hispanic, short, old, etc.; I have been hurt; I got stung once; I have to protect myself, or you get the picture so fill in the blank..."
- In-and-out attention daydreaming— catching every other word and believing you understand the entire message.