

Taking Empathy to the Virtual World

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Super Power: Show Empathy

- Practice active listening
- Pay attention and maintain eye contact
- Be present throughout the meeting. Nicklin added, “Keep your eyes on [the screen], your shoulders square, and lean in physically, and you’ll activate subconscious signs of connectivity and empathy, even when separated by technology. [Never] work on another device! On Zoom, it is even more overt that you are focusing on another screen as people have a direct line of sight to the direction of your gaze. Given the lack of context this can be seen as far more disrespectful and demotivating than it perhaps would if you were in a physical meeting.”
- Get the big picture, if a colleague expresses a struggle, said Julie A. Chesley, an associate professor of organization theory and management at the Pepperdine Graziadio Business School. “What is the context, what is the frame of mind of this other person, what’s going on in their world? Then, instead of trying to solve the issue for them, fix things or try and make them feel better, validate what’s going on. Reflect their feelings descriptively—‘Wow that’s so discouraging.’ If you can relate, let them know ‘I’d be frustrated too.’” Chesley’s Pepperdine colleague, Terri Egan, associate professor of applied behavioral science, said: “Try and stay out of judgment—and that’s hard to do. It’s so easy to be on autopilot and judge another person’s thoughts or actions, or what they should be feeling or doing. Unfortunately, that doesn’t foster connection or understanding.”
- Tackle the Zoom/video meeting challenges, said Dr. Pavan Madan, a psychiatrist with Community Psychiatry in Davis, CA. “Expressing empathy on Zoom can be difficult. Pay attention to your body language. Your eyes and head are doing most of the nonverbal communication. Limit hand gestures since they tend to get exaggerated on video, especially if you are sitting too close to the camera. [Consider] the tech you’re using; it can impact how you’re expressing yourself. Use a good quality camera so you can be seen clearly, and better gauge nonverbal communication.
- Avoid distractions, Madan said. “Have a clutter-free background so the other person doesn’t get distracted to the point of misinterpreting your reactions. Don’t have other browser windows open during important conversations. Consider using wireless earbuds so you can listen easily and talk comfortably and calmly, in a low-tone of voice. Consider whisper-quiet mice and keyboards for distraction-free typing and clicking during conversations.”



Ears 聽 *Eyes*
Undivided Attention
Heart

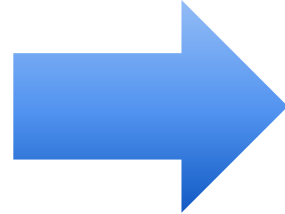


Real Listening

The Chinese character for listening is made up of four characters. Are you using all of them when you listen?

Why Listening Can Be Hard

People speak at an average rate of 125 words per minute



People can process at an average rate of 500 words per minute

The key to receiving messages clearly is active listening

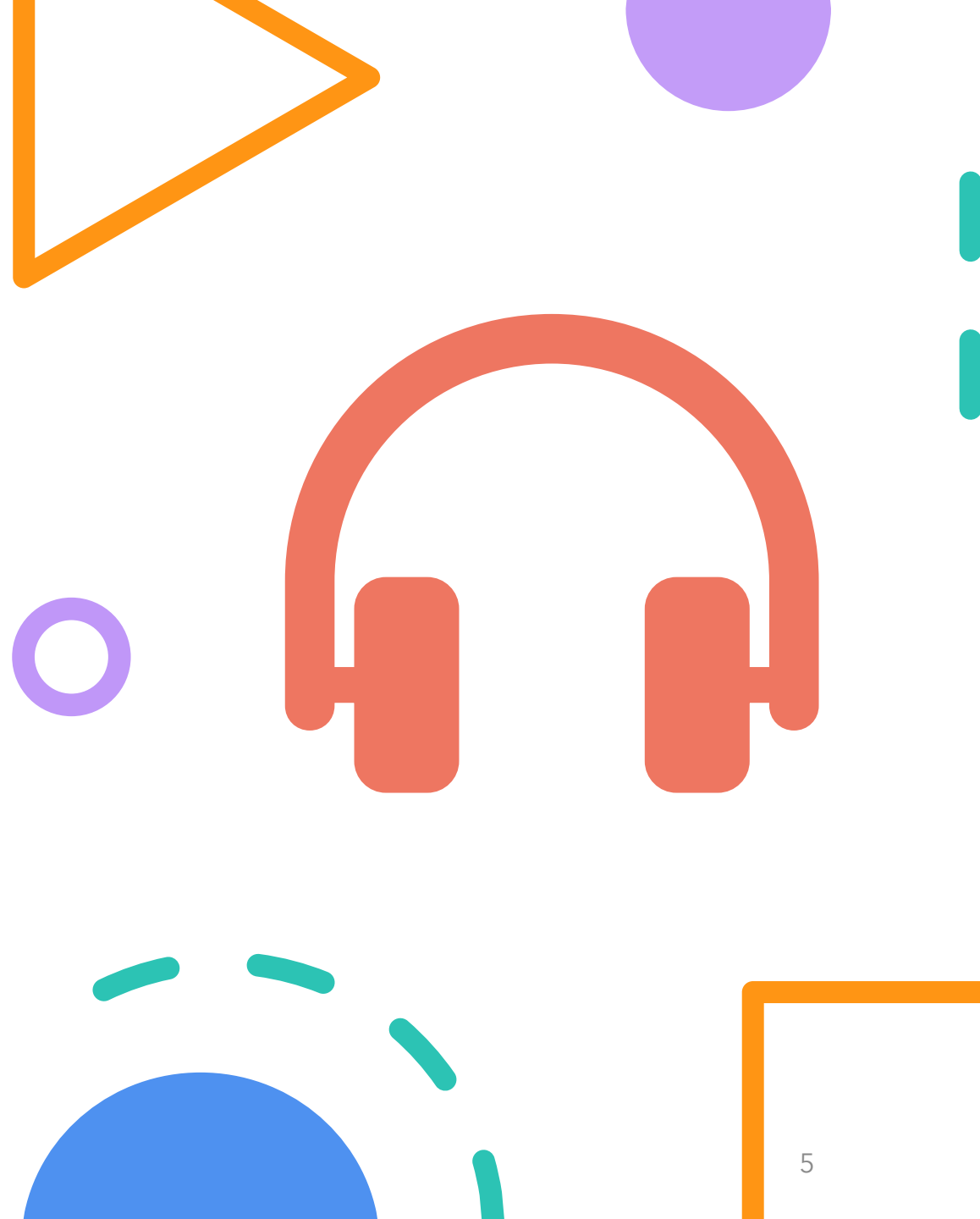
Listening for Clarity

Listening for empathy

Being curious, not certain

Seeking to learn and understand

- Being silent
- Asking questions
- Summarizing understanding
- Validating



Use Questions to Connect

Use open ended

- Gain clarity
- Explore options
- Focus on:
 - Who, what, when, where, how
 - Tell me about, describe, help me understand, let's explore, tell me more

Really listen and let the answer guide your next question

You Can't Multitask - Usually

When are the most efficient times to multitask?

- Watching a movie on TV while eating your meal
- Talking to the passengers in your car while driving
- Responding to simple emails while listening to your favorite podcast or audio book
- Cooking dinner and checking text
- Exercising while watching the news on television
- Talking on the phone while folding laundry

They don't require any significant cognitive power. Your brain can do one thing well at a time.

Some References

- **Why is multitasking killing your brain?** Various studies have shown that multitasking increases our brain's production of cortisol, a hormone that creates stress. Once we're stressed and mentally fatigued, anxiety builds up. And this leads to stress builds up. It's a vicious cycle of constant stress and anxiety. But not all multitasking activities are equally stressful.
 - www.theladders.com/career-advice/9-ways-multitasking-i...
- **Why multitasking is a terrible idea?** "Multitasking implies that you can do multiple lines of action that are not connected or are marginally connected at the same time, which implies that you can maintain focus to have some degree of function in all of those. And that's impossible." Instead, we end up chronically distracted.
 - [Why Multitasking is Bad for You - Lifehack](http://www.wellandgood.com/multitasking-myth/)
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