



MINDSET MONDAY

ACTIVE LISTENING II

By Leonetha Ward, MBA

Have you ever felt like your preferences were being overlooked?

Picture this: you enjoy cheese on your broccoli, but someone keeps insisting you try sugar instead. Sounds ridiculous, right? And yet, this type of interaction happens all the time—and it speaks to a deeper issue in communication: are we listening to understand, or just listening to reply?

The Topping Tug-of-War

Here's a brief exchange to illustrate:

Me: I prefer cheese on my broccoli.

Them: But sugar is sweet—who doesn't love sweet things?

Me: Even so, I really like cheddar with my broccoli.

Them: Why aren't you open to my suggestion?

Me: Because I don't enjoy sugar on my broccoli.

Them: But sweet makes everything better—why not try it?

What seems like a silly debate over broccoli reveals a common mistake: pushing our own preferences instead of respecting someone else's.

The Power of Active Listening

At the heart of better communication is active listening—the ability to hear more than just words, to understand the meaning, emotion, and intention behind them.

When someone says, "I prefer cheese," it's not just about the topping—it's about what feels right for them. Preferences are personal. No amount of persuasion will change how someone truly feels. And honestly, cheese really *does* bring out the best in broccoli's natural flavor.

How to Practice Active Listening:

- **Be Present:** Put away distractions and give your full attention.
- **Acknowledge:** Use body language and small phrases like "I see" or "Tell me more" to show engagement.
- **Clarify:** Paraphrase what you heard: "So you enjoy cheese because it enhances the flavor—is that right?"

- Avoid Interrupting: Let the other person finish before sharing your thoughts.
- Respond with Care: Let your response reflect that you *understood* — not just that you *heard* them.

Final Thought

The next time you're in a conversation—whether about toppings or something more meaningful—remember the broccoli and cheese example. Good communication isn't about convincing others to adopt our taste. It's about respecting their experiences, their choices, and their voice.

So let's commit to listening better—not to reply, but to *truly understand*.

Because in the end, it's not about getting someone to like sugar on their broccoli...

It's about honoring their choice to enjoy cheese.

Happy listening.

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