

## The Power of Listening: A Foundation for Connection and Growth

Listening is more than hearing words. It's an intentional act of presence, empathy, and understanding. When we truly (actively) listen, we invite the person in front of us to feel seen, heard, and valued. Active listening opens the door to trust, clarity, and meaningful exchange. The SHAVER+ model offers a practical framework to deepen your listening skills by guiding you through essential steps, from acknowledging someone's presence to responding thoughtfully and revisiting any part of the conversation as needed. When we listen well, we don't just gather information. We create a space for connection, insight, and transformation.

### 7 Listening Strategies: SHAVER+™

- ✓ **See** = Be present; stop what you're doing and **see** the person.
- ✓ **Hear** = Practice active listening; remove distractions; take notes; try not to interrupt.  
(listen = silent > same letters)
- ✓ **Acknowledge** = Tune in to their joy, pain, suffering, anger; acknowledge their presence and emotional state (validate; empathize).
- ✓ **Verify** = Determine and/or, confirm the message. Listen attentively while remaining alert for cues; rephrase; ask questions to ensure understanding. **Be aware of your own body language, facial expressions, tone, words (7/38/55).**
- ✓ **Entertain** = Give real consideration to the message or request. Make time, remain open-minded, explore, be curious and ask probing questions, remove defensive barriers, lower your ego and elevate your humility and/or vulnerability; re-evaluate your position on the topic; circle back as necessary with more questions.
- ✓ **Respond** = Take an action; request the time you need to evaluate the discussion; commit to follow-up; circle back; promote closure; express thanks; shake hands; etc.
- ✓ **Repeat** = Return to any stage of the process.

### Bringing It All Together

Effective listening is one of the most powerful tools we have to build trust, strengthen relationships, and foster mutual understanding. When you practice the SHAVER+ approach, you demonstrate respect, patience, and curiosity, all of which create space for real connection and growth. Remember, meaningful communication isn't about rushing to respond; it's about showing up fully and being willing to engage in the moment. Let this model guide you, and know that at any time, you can return to a previous step to continue deepening the conversation. Listening is a skill, and like all powerful skills, it gets stronger with practice.