MENTORING AND COMMUNICATION

Listening Barriers and Skills

Common Problems/Barriers in Listening

1. Becoming “over stimulated” by something the speaker says, such that we begin thinking of our own rebuttals and fail to hear the rest of what the speaker has to say.
2. Listening only for facts.
3. Tolerating, creating, or failing to adjust to distractions.
4. Faking attention.
5. Listening only to what is easy to understand.
6. Allowing emotion-laden words to interfere with listening (e.g. preferred group designations; racist, sexist, or homophobic language).
7. Permitting personal prejudice or deep-seated convictions to impair comprehension.
   - Wasting the advantages of the differential between speech rate and thought-processing speed.
8. Viewing a topic as uninteresting.
9. Criticizing a speaker’s appearance or her/his communication style (verbal cues, nonverbal cues, or both) rather than responding to her/his message.

Improving Listening Skills

1. Develop a desire (motivation) to listen, regardless of your level of interest in the subject matter.
2. Increase your capacity to listen.
3. Infer the speaker’s intent or purpose: what is the speaker implying or suggesting about her/his goals or needs?
4. Determine your own purpose in every listening situation.
5. Become aware of your own biases and attitudes. What words or ideas or beliefs function as “shock” words to you?
6. Learn to use your “spare time” effectively and productively as you listen.
7. Analyze your listening habits (both productive and unproductive).
8. Be mentally and physically prepared to listen.
9. Delay judgments hear the speaker out before you make judgments.
10. Listen not only for facts, but for main ideas, principles, concepts, and patterns.