

Mastering the Art of Mindful Listening

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Abstract

Did you know that veterinarians and physicians interrupt their clients after only 10 to 20 seconds on average? Poor listening may result in mistakes, wasted time and interpersonal conflict in organizations and the veterinary workplace. Listening is considered a vital communication skill, yet very few individuals have received formal training in listening. In this workshop, strategies for improving listening skills will be discussed and practiced. Workshop participants will hone their mindful listening skills, and these newly implemented listening skills will likely improve teamwork and staff productivity and boost client trust, compliance, and satisfaction.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe different forms of listening
2. List five benefits of improving listening skills
3. Implement mindful listening techniques within veterinary organizations and workplaces

Importance of Listening

- Listening is “the learned process of receiving, interpreting, recalling, evaluating and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages”¹
- Hearing is a passive process that only requires partial attention and minimal effort, whereas listening is an active process and a learned skill that requires deliberate and full attention¹
- Effective listening leads to increased patient satisfaction, increased compliance, increased adoption of preventive measures, increased trust, better physician-nurse relationships, fewer malpractice claims, more job satisfaction, better staff productivity, and better teamwork¹
- In one study, one 1/3 of appointments contained a solicitation, 1/2 of clients were interrupted, the average time for interruption was only 15 seconds, and clients were 4x as likely to express a new concern at the end of an appointment with no initial solicitation²
- Multitasking, distractions, stress, and our brains processing information faster than speaking rate are all threats to mindful listening

What is Mindfulness?

“awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally”³

-Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness Benefits⁴

Decreased rumination, stress reduction, improved wellbeing, increased focus and attention, less emotional reactivity, protects against the emotionally stressful effects of relationship conflict, predicts relationship satisfaction

Forms of Listening

Listening Modes¹

Hearing: Receiving raw data
Selecting: Choosing what to listen to
Evaluating: Analyze and judge
Remembering: Drawing upon memory
Attending: Focusing your attention
Understanding: Assigning meaning
Responding: Giving feedback

Forms of Listening^{1, 5}

Active listening
Comprehension listening
Critical listening
Dialogic listening
Empathetic listening
Informational listening
Rapport listening
Therapeutic listening

Listening to win: You are wrong, I'm right.

Listening to fix: I have the right solutions. I know how to fix you.

Mindful listening: Watch assumption that we are right, withhold judgment, & understand

The Art of Mindful Listening^{1,6}

Listening on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally

Pay Attention

Pay attention to your nonverbals (nodding, open), their nonverbals (emotions, voice), your thoughts and biases, the underlying meaning

Suspend Judgment

Listening to understand, have empathy, and an open mind

Reflect

Paraphrase information, paraphrase emotion. This let's the other person know you are listening

Clarify

Ask good open-ended questions and clarifying questions

Summarize

Summarize what you have heard so far

What does this look like in a veterinary visit?

1. Open ended question
2. Active listening
3. Screen for additional concerns
4. Summarize concerns and set agenda

References

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