



Human Being

The Four Levels of Listening

Superficial Listening: This is the lowest level of listening. At this level, even though you may look like you're listening, you're not really. As a result you would be unable to recount much of what the person was telling you, or remember any instructions they had just given you.

Conversational Listening: This is the level at which most people listen most of the time. At this level people are listening out for a point of interest that triggers thoughts and ideas in their own mind that they then share. People engaged in conversational listening are also thinking about what they want to say next, and are spending equal or more time formulating their own words and stories. As a result, they only remember the bare bones of what the other person is saying.

Active Listening: At this level of listening the person is putting much more of their focus on the other person rather than their own internal thoughts. Someone who is actively listening would be able to recall in detail what has been said to them, both immediately afterwards as well as after some time has passed.

Deep Listening: This is the highest (or deepest!) level of listening. At this level you are not only putting your focus and attention on what the other person is saying, but also on what they're NOT saying. By watching the person's body language and listening to the tone, rhythm and pitch of their voice, you are able to read between the lines and understand with some accuracy what is going on emotionally for the other person.

In order for people to feel heard, valued and engaged, it is useful to think about reaching for an 'active' level of listening with those around you and during feedback or difficult conversations – aim towards a 'deep' level of listening.