



Customer Service Notes for

Listening – A Key to Exceptional Service

We know that listening well is not an easy skill. Yet, we also know that it is critical to communicating effectively with your participants and co-workers.

Consider the active listening technique. This involves the receiver listening intently to the sender. The receiver can summarize the message to be sure there is no misunderstanding. For instance, a WIC staff member who is on the phone with a participant trying to schedule an appointment might say, “So it sounds like after three o’clock when you get out of work is the best time for an appointment for you. Is that correct?” Using this technique ensures that both you and the participant are on the same page and allows the participant to clarify if what you summarized is not correct.

When you are listening, be sure that you are truly listening and not thinking about what you want to say next. Also, do not interrupt the person speaking.

When listening, be mindful of your non-verbal communication when the communication is in person. Some individuals do not realize that they may be rolling their eyes or frowning. This will come across as your being impatient with the speaker. Instead, smile and use positive body language to show your interest.

While listening, some people like to take summarizing notes to capture what the speaker is saying. This can be particularly helpful if you are speaking with a participant who has a complicated situation or is going into great detail.

Listening is really important if English is not the primary language of the participant. The aforementioned active listening technique can be especially useful in these situations.

The above advice and techniques work not only with participants, but also with your co-workers and supervisor.

Again, improving one’s listening skills is not easy. However, by doing so, your customer service with participants will be enhanced and your communication with your co-workers and supervisors will be improved.

Questions for Reflection

1. How often do you use the active listening technique?
2. Are you aware of your non-verbal behavior when communicating with someone in person?



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