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“The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.” Ralph Nichols

- In a world where electronic communication is the norm and people are more disconnected from one another than ever, mindful listening is paramount.
- What is mindful listening?
 - Listening with empathy and curiosity while being fully present without interruption or criticism.
 - Differs from active listening in that it engages the listener to monitor their own thoughts, reactions or feelings to improve focus and minimize distraction.
- Key concepts of mindful listening:
 - empathy
 - vulnerability
 - connection
 - presence
 - patience
 - impartiality
 - noting verbal and non-verbal cues
 - comfort with silence
 - open-ended questions
 - paraphrasing/reflection
- Four attributes of empathy:¹
 - See the world as others see it
 - Be nonjudgmental
 - Understand another's feelings
 - Communicate the understanding
- Empathy vs. sympathy:
 - Empathy is “the ability to perceive a situation from the other person’s perspective. To see, hear and feel the unique world of the other.”²
 - Sympathy is feeling sorrow or pity for someone’s misfortune.
 - “Empathy fuels connection. Sympathy drives disconnection.”³
- Five ways to listen better:⁴
 - Silence: sit quietly for 3 minutes per day
 - “The mixer”: consciously separate sounds in a loud environment
 - Savoring: note mundane sounds in everyday life (e.g., birds chirping)
 - Listening positions: apply filters to your listening (e.g., active or empathetic)
 - RASA
 - Receive: pay attention to the speaker
 - Appreciate: maintain eye contact, nod, smile etc.
 - Summarize: reflect back on what you heard
 - Ask: show curiosity
- Things to avoid in mindful listening:
 - sympathy
 - giving advice
 - attempting to fix
 - distraction
- Barriers to mindful listening:
 - Fear of and discomfort with vulnerability
 - Insertion of own agenda
 - Negative self-talk
 - Time constraints
 - Social restrictions
 - Prevalence of electronic communication
 - Distractions
- Rewards of mindful listening:
 - more meaningful relationships
 - improved communication skills
 - deeper understanding of others
 - improved self-esteem
 - reduced anxiety
 - increased positive feeling.

References:

1. Wiseman, T. A concept analysis of empathy. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 1996 (23), 1162-1167.
2. Ivey A, Pederson P, and Ivey M (2001). *Intentional group counseling: A microskills approach*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
3. <https://brenebrown.com/videos/rsa-short-empathy/>
4. https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better?utm_source=tcdcomshare&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tcdspread