



Communication | Listening

Do You Have The EARS To Listen?

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Listening to other people is hard. It's not just a question of hearing but really tuning into what someone is saying and taking it in.

Active listening is an art and teachers are pretty good at it. They have to be, especially school leaders. But unlike talking, reading and writing we are not taught how to listen.

One practical model for listening that is worth training others in is the EARS model:

E: Explore. Use open-ended questions and observe non-verbal messages.

A: Acknowledge by paraphrasing what you believe was said.

R: Responds using the least amount of time.

There is a variation of this model that also contributes towards successful listening and that is EARS:

E: Empathise – understand the perspective of the speaker

A: Acknowledge – use responsive communication such as “mm-hm”, “Uh-huh”, “I see”, “Yes, I understand”

R: Reflect – use key words and pause to think

S: Summarise – frequently summarise what has been said

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There's more.

According to the “four ear” model of communication, we speak and listen through four separate channels.

The four-ear model or four-sides model (also known as communication square or four-ears model) is a communication model by Friedemann Schulz von Thun who proposes that each verbal message contains four different dimensions of communication: fact, self-revealing, relationship, and appeal.

Friedemann Schulz von Thun enlarges the [Watzlawick Model of communication](#) by adding two more layers: the self-revealing layer and the appeal layer:

1. **Factual content:** truth, data, facts, etc. Stating reality, telling it like it is. Actual, specific, “mere” information (What are the facts and data I’m stating?).
2. **Self-revelation:** the sender tells the receiver something personal (e.g. values, motives, emotions, etc.). Information about yourself that you wish to share with the other person (What I am revealing about myself).
3. **Relationship:** how the sender communicates what they think of the receiver and how they get along. Terms that express how you feel about the other person and about your relationship with that person (How I relate to, think about, and regard the other person).
4. **Appeal:** also known as “call to action”, the desire, advice, instruction, effects, etc. the sender is looking for. A request that you are making of the other person (What I’m seeking from the other person).

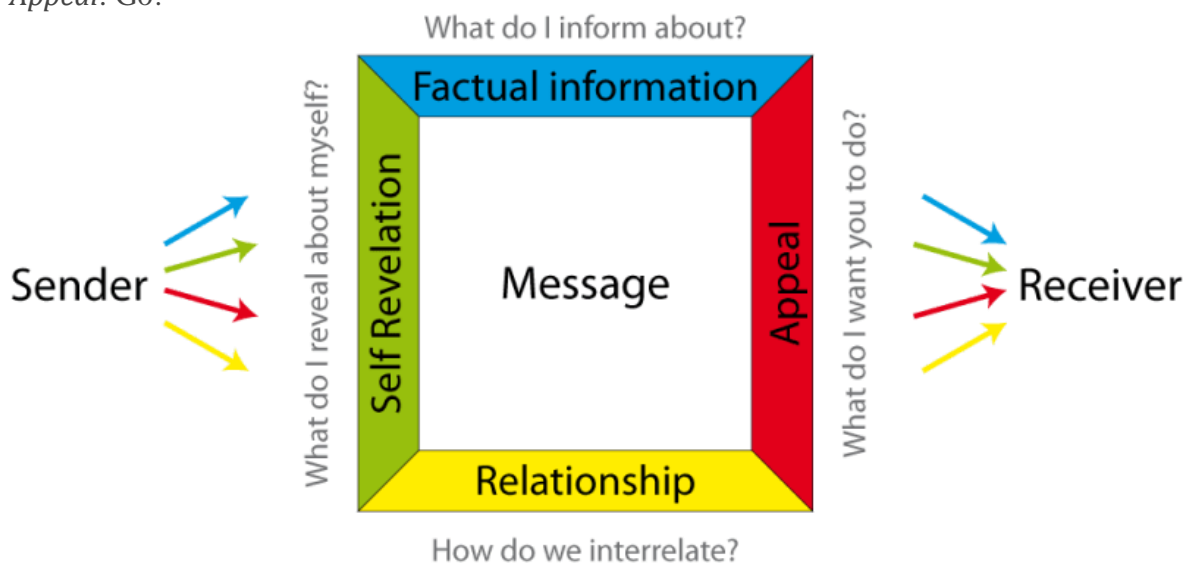
The classic example Schulz von Thun uses is a man telling his wife that “the traffic light is green”, while waiting at a junction.

Factual content: The green sign is on.

Self-revelation: I want to get going.

Relationship: You need my help.

Appeal: Go!



This model suggests that what we communicate to others depends on which message we hope they will receive.

Improve your communication skills with the Four Sides Communication Model and keep it in the back of your head:

Reference:

Schulz von Thun, Friedemann. 2010. Miteinander Reden 1: Störungen Und Klärungen: Allgemeine Psychologie Der Kommunikation. Auflage: 48. Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.

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