



Do People Listen When You Talk?

Here are a few tips to win the ears of friends, home ones, and countrymen



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YOUR EIGHT-YEAR-OLD SON comes running to you. He shouts gleefully: "Look, Mom, I caught a worm!"

You reply: "Go wash your dirty hands." He doesn't wash his hands because he hasn't listened.

Your wife tells the same jokes at every party. You complain to her. But the inanity goes on.

You go to your boss to ask for a raise. He replies: "Aha, mmm, we'll see about it." But somehow he never gets around to seeing about it.

In each of these instances, the essential and all-important process of communication, the give-and-take of speaking and listening, has broken down. In none of these cases has the speaker—whether the mother, husband, or employee—made the person to whom he was talking want to listen.

Instead, each has erected barriers to listening—the mother because she has frustrated her child by nipping his curiosity with her unimaginative "wash your hands"; the husband because he never listened to her at other times, and it was only by telling silly jokes in a group that she was able to win center stage; and the boss because in his book you had long since proved a bore not worth hearing out.

Making people listen when you speak is of pivotal importance in your life.

When, for instance, you want your child to listen, you should try to set the stage for listening. The

little boy with the worm not only would have washed his hands but also would have developed a warmer and more receptive attitude toward his mother in all things if, instead of stifling his natural curiosity, she had listened to the note of enthusiasm in his voice and had replied with: "Yes, this is a lovely worm!" Then her disciplinary, "Well, now, how about washing your hands before dinner?" would have meant something.

Wives whose voices carry the accents of accusation should re-examine their attitude toward their husbands. "What can my tone of voice possibly have to do with my attitude toward my husband?" one woman asked us. The first step in her journey toward self-awareness was to have her make a recording of her voice.

"That's not my voice," she protested. "It sounds like a nag, a shrew."

We made another record and another. We made records when she was in a perverse mood and when she was in a mellow mood. And as she came to hear the differences, she also came to recognize how her tones sometimes alienated her husband.

Moreover, from that recognition flowed a complete reorganization of her attitude toward her husband and her way of speaking to him. With her new voice, she was now able to hold not only her husband's attention but that of other persons in a way that formerly had been impossible for her.

On the job, you can make persons listen to you without being a vacant glad-hander. Persuasiveness consists in cultivating the art of saying the right thing at the right time in the right place with the right bodily attitude and in the right tone of voice. Interestingly, when the words you use and the tone of voice in which you say them contradict

each other, it is the tone of voice and not the words themselves which the listener believes. "A fine job you've done," says the boss in a sneering tone. You know all too well that this isn't praise, but blame.

Instead of trying to impress others, recognize your strengths and your weaknesses for what they are. Then either delay important action until you can overcome your weakness, or take your chances with them. You will find sincerity rather than insincerity, the truthful rather than the bogus, makes others listen when you speak. People will listen to you more willingly, too, if you have authority and conviction to back up what you say.

ABOVE ALL, listen to yourself. Each of us is far more driven to talk than to listen. Show that you yourself are interested in what you are saying. Your listener catches your emotion and will be as enthusiastic about your message as you are.

Your tone of voice reveals emotion and has a subtle unspoken effect on your listener. Anger, for instance, causes your voice to be too high, too fast, too loud. Depression, too soft, too slow, too low. Anxiety produces hemming and hawing.

You spend more than 70 percent of your waking time in face-to-face communication, either as a speaker or listener. You step on an unseen platform at home, in the office, shop, or factory. You confer with the salesman and the plumber, the doctor and lawyer, the children's teacher, and with superiors and subordinates on the job. Your daily life is just one unending conversation.

When that conversation is going well, the difference between speaker and listener blurs. Together you are caught in the mutual excitement of sharing ideas.

COVER:

A wistful-eyed Marilyn Monroe, on the set of "The Misfits," was photographed for our cover by Erich Hartmann. In this issue, Marilyn tells what Clark Gable has meant to her since childhood. See story on p. 4.

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