

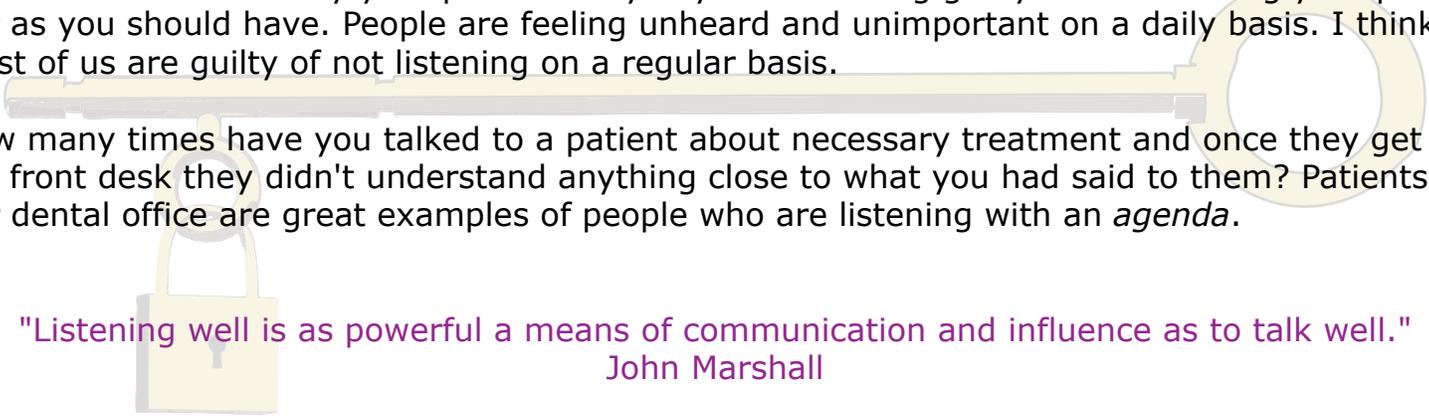
## “Giving the Gift of Listen”

The other day I was speaking with a colleague of mine over coffee. While we sat enjoying our coffee and great conversation, I began to realize that as I was speaking, my colleague was finishing my sentence. She was finishing it for me, before I had a chance to even complete my thought; let alone the sentence and where I was headed with my words.

I am sure you have had this happen to you. I was thinking that most likely she wasn't focused on what I was saying but her focus was on what "I" was **going** to say.

You may be married for 2 yrs or 20 yrs, and I bet there is a chance that at some point in time you have felt unheard by your partner. Maybe you are feeling guilty for not hearing your partner as you should have. People are feeling unheard and unimportant on a daily basis. I think most of us are guilty of not listening on a regular basis.

How many times have you talked to a patient about necessary treatment and once they get to the front desk they didn't understand anything close to what you had said to them? Patients in our dental office are great examples of people who are listening with an *agenda*.



"Listening well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well."  
John Marshall

Listening is a skill which is not taught. It is one which when it is developed can assist us in many areas of our life. Sometimes we hear what we want to hear rather than what is being said. The result of this type of listening can increase our stress levels. The answer to lower stress is when you truly listen to what is being said. Listening well can pay big dividends in your personal relationships and your business endeavors as well.

When you commit to hearing exactly what another person is saying you're **GIVING THE GIFT of Listening**. Think of this not only as giving a gift to another person but as a gift you are giving to yourself. You are able to respond appropriately to another person when you are listening appropriately. A fine reward to receive for listening appropriately can increase your relationship with many other human beings you come in contact with. When you think of listening as an art form you are able to understand how another person is feeling and understand how to appropriately respond to another person.



“Working As a Team to Improve Oral Hygiene”

When you master the *art of listening* you have made a commitment to give at an emotional and spiritual level to another person. You are now able to give validation, acknowledgment, respect or even a confirmation another may be seeking.

Many people connect during conversation with an “addiction” to becoming heard or validated. Of course this is not at a conscious level but no one wants to talk to a wall. People want the other person to hear their point, their story, their opinion, their accomplishments, and their feelings on the subject. They are usually politely persistent, and they want the last word. As I child I was referred to as “Chatty Cathy”, after a popular doll back in the 60’s. I guess I didn’t understand about listening. This is now something I have since made a commitment to work on.

Imagine what it looks like, sounds like and feels like to have people with different agendas collide. One person just wants to be heard and acknowledged and the other one is thinking their own thoughts.

Neither person is heard; neither is validated. Feelings are hurt or, at best, not nurtured. The result is an emotional train wreck. Empowerment, self-esteem, friendship, relationship and love are overlooked — or even damaged.

In order to give the gift of listening you need to put your own agenda aside. When the conversation begins it is important to think about putting your agenda aside and understand; this is going to be “all about the other person.” It is not something you *need* to do but most importantly you need to do this when your goal is for the other person to leave the conversation feeling better about himself than they did before they began speaking to you. When is this gift most important to give?

Here we are in a complex economy and the most important tool for us is improving our personal skills. This is one time in the past 50+ years to “kick it up a notch” and *be the very best we can be*.

Listening is just one of the many tools most of us can improve upon. The holidays are approaching. What an easy, cost-effective and worth while gift to gift this year!

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