

## Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 [www.cipmarin.org](http://www.cipmarin.org)

### 2024-2025 News & Notes



## August 2025 News & Notes

### How to Listen, How to Respond

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

#### How to Listen, How to Respond

“Listening is one of the most important skills you can have,” states the Mind Tool Editorial Team<sup>1</sup>. “How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others.”

Understood this way, it makes sense to be more aware of our habits, good and bad, and become more mindful of listening well.

For example, thoughtful listening is especially essential in our interactions with children. Paying close attention to what a child says not only provides a better understanding of what is being said, but also models how to listen, take in, and respond. More importantly, it conveys to the child that they are worthy of your attention, and that their thoughts and feelings matter.

The Mind Team outlines good listening habits.

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“Be ready to pay attention; if possible, remove distractions such as television, other conversations, and other audio or visual interference.

“Listen carefully to what is being said, creating a visual image in your mind or focusing on key words.

“Communicate your attention by nodding or making brief comments, ‘Oh, I see,’ ‘Yes,’ or ‘Okay’.

“Realize that people have different styles of communication. Some come right to the point; others like to provide context or background they feel is important. Be patient.

“Wait for the speaker to finish before following up with a question. It will allow you to hear the entirety of their thought rather than missing important information”.

### **Different Points of View**

An article appearing on the University of Colorado website earlier this year, “How to talk to others with a different point of view,”<sup>2</sup> offers “some ways to turn a difficult conversation into a thoughtful discussion.” As a university bringing together an international student body, the authors

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anticipate the robust coming together of people from disparate backgrounds.

“We can empower ourselves to think critically about different points of view when we listen with authentic curiosity and give space for others to express their thoughts and opinions.”

The article stresses the need to prioritize listening. In a dialogue, people often formulate their response while the other person is talking instead of fully paying attention to what’s being said. When trying to have a thoughtful conversation with someone, the goal should not be to debunk each other’s points or bombard someone with facts or opinions.

“Instead of listening to respond, try listening to understand. Setting the intention to listen will help you approach the conversation more openly rather than coming to it with set points and arguments.”

Similarly, the Center for Media Engagement<sup>3</sup> recently posted the findings of their survey of “people who live in communities with a mix of political beliefs to glean their best strategies for talking to those with whom they disagree.” The results offer advice for talking across political differences.

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For example, rather than focus on the politics you don't share, focus on the individual you're speaking with, especially if you've built a relationship with this person, perhaps as a neighbor or fellow-parent, over time. Seek a common ground; chances are, there are several topics you can agree on. When discussing political issues, stick to the facts, and be an advocate for your cause, rather than an opponent of their position. When necessary, be willing to walk away before the disagreement escalates.

- 1 <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm>
- 2 [www.colorado.edu/studentlife/different-points-of-view](http://www.colorado.edu/studentlife/different-points-of-view)
- 3 <https://mediaengagement.org/?s=How+to+Talk+to+People+Who+Disagree+with+You+Politically>

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