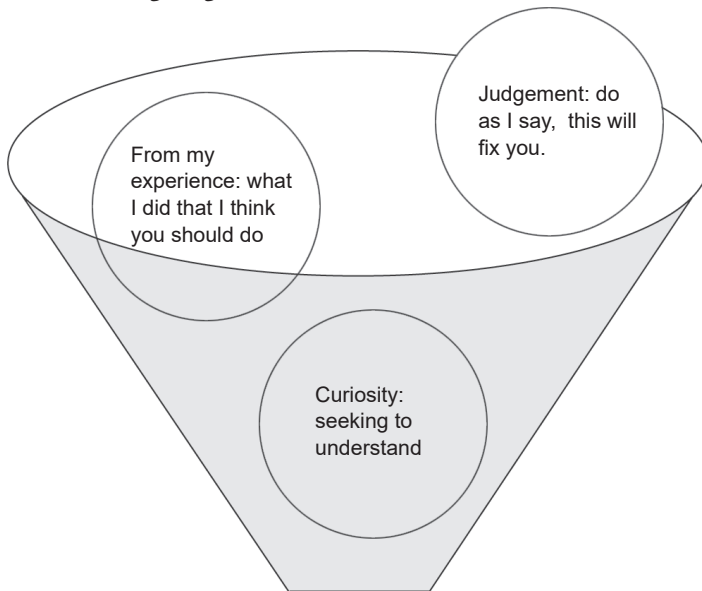




Focused Listening

Listening is a skill we can work on continuously. What makes listening challenging? Have you ever been listening to someone and all of a sudden you realize you have not heard or understood what they were saying? We often find ourselves multi-tasking when listening. We may think about what we have to accomplish, what we want to say, or even work at something else. Sometimes we are tired, not focused or zoned out and do not listen intently.

What further challenges us is that we also filter our listening through our thinking, which is influenced by our own beliefs, biases, mental models, assumptions and perspectives. Common thinking filters are illustrated in the following diagram.



Clues to good listening

- ◆ Be fully aware of your own filters and be conscious of the effect on your listening
- ◆ Stay fully present in the moment
- ◆ Bring yourself to the conversation, not your role
- ◆ Make appropriate eye contact

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- ◆ Face the speaker and set an environment with appropriate personal space
- ◆ Hear only the speaker; ignore self-talk
- ◆ Ask questions for clarification
- ◆ Check assumptions
- ◆ Focus to listen at all levels . . . verbal and non-verbal
- ◆ Listen actively . . . or repeat if needed, what the speaker is saying
- ◆ Stay curious as opposed to judgmental
- ◆ Let others finish speaking before you speak
- ◆ Allow for silence, some people need more thinking time than others
- ◆ If you lose your focus, tell the speaker and ask for what you may have missed
- ◆ Ask powerful open-ended questions to gather more information. Start your question with what, where, when, how, why (use this word with caution). You might also simply say “tell me more.”

Listen twice as much as you speak—remember you have one mouth and two ears for a reason.

HINT

Other Tri-namics™ resources that may be helpful:
Powerful Questions to solicit more information
Recipe for a Coaching Dialogue for more ideas on listening