

*The following is a highlighted summary of the book, **Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone** by Mark Goulston M.D. and Keith Ferrazzi. The statements below are key points of the book as determined by James Altfeld and have been made available at no charge to the user.*

Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone by Mark Goulston M.D. and Keith Ferrazzi

There is such a thing as full amygdala hijack when a person just loses it and is no longer in control of their actions. This is when someone becomes so angry that you cannot reason with them.

When presenting to people, take the people to whom you are presenting into consideration. Engage them. Do not just start talking. Address them. Ask them how they are and if they can hear you clearly. Watch for clues regarding eyes glazing over and whether or not you are losing them. If you should see that, just say, You've heard enough for now. Let's take a break and come back in ten minutes.

In our judgment of people, we all too often grab recent data from early interactions and jump to a quick conclusion, using that hard-wired data to say the person is lazy, sloppy, or has a lousy work ethic. Truth be known that this person is none of the above. Truth is, this person has a grandfather with Alzheimer's and his grandmother had a stroke last night. Both of her parents are dead and she is the primary caregiver. The solution is to get rid of our filter, which is the stuff you already know about the person and approach the situation with a tabula rasa attitude. We need to remove our mental blocks and prejudices in dealing with people.

Rick Middleton of Executive Expression in LA created the GGNEE model to show how e put people in mental boxes.

1. **Gender**
2. **Generation (age)**
3. **Nationality (or ethnicity)**
4. **Education level**
5. **Emotion**

We each have an interpretation hardwired in our heads for each of these boxes.

The solution is to Think About What You're Thinking!

When you encounter problem people, realize that there's a reason they are behaving the way they do. It may be a new problem, or a long-term problem, or it could be that they really are just jerks. Regardless, Open Your Mind and look for the reasons behind the behavior and you will take the first step toward breaking down barriers and communicating with an impossible person.

Exercise: Think of a problem person you don't know very well... someone who misses deadlines, blows up for no apparent reason, acts hostile, is oversensitive to criticism, or otherwise drives you nuts. Make a list of the words you use to describe the person.

Now think of five Secrets that could underlie the person's behavior that the person is not going to volunteer to tell you. Now picture how your feelings about the person would change in each scenario you imagine.

If this person is real and available, sit down with them, open your mind and see if you can find out the true reason for the problem behaviors you see.

On Making Mistakes:

People, even confident people, are more afraid of making mistakes than they are of wanting to do something right. That's because they are afraid of being pounced upon if things go badly and afraid of the hit their self-esteem will take if they screw up. When these people make a mistake and feel criticized or embarrassed from without and humiliated from within, they often promise themselves, "Never again will I put myself in a position to be beaten up like this." This unconsciously holds them back when they have to make a new decision that might turn out to be a mistake. And the older the person is, the greater the chance of this happening. And when confronted with the question, Why Didn't You Make the Decision? The real answer, which they won't tell you, is that they are afraid, if not terrified of making a mistake.

Steps for Making Another Person Feel Felt!

1. Attach an emotion to what you think the other person is feeling, such as frustrated, anger or afraid.
2. Say, "I'm trying to get a sense of what you're feeling and I think it is _____ (fill in the emotion.) Is that correct? If it's not, then just what ARE you feeling? (Now remain quiet and WAIT for their response.)"
3. Once they give their answer, ask, "How _____ are you? Again, give the person time to respond. Be prepared for a torrent of emotions. Allow them to let it all out."
4. Next ask, "And the reason you are so _____ is because?" Let them vent.
5. Then ask, "Tell me what needs to happen for that feeling to feel better? Wait for their response."
6. Finally ask, "What part can I play in making that happen? What part can you play in making that happen?"

Example:

I have a scheduled appointment with someone but you find the person distracted and cold towards you the moment you enter his office. Upon seeing this, the first question I ask is, "How much time do you have to meet with me right now?" His response was, "Not much." I actually thought he was about to see me to the door, but he didn't. He fumbled with his appointment calendar, looked up and said, "You have twenty minutes."

I took a deep breath. "Look", I said, "what I have to say requires your undivided attention which you obviously can't give me because there is something on your mind that is much more important than meeting with me. So here's the deal. Let's stop now at minute three and re-schedule our meeting when you can give me your full attention. Take the remaining 17 minutes before your next appointment and take care of whatever is weighing on your mind, because it is not fair to your people, people outside like me, and even yourself to not be able to listen."

There was a pause when he looked me right in the eye. He was totally engaged now. He said, "I'm a very private person when it comes to personal matters. You've known me for three minutes and already know more about me than people out there who have known me for ten years or longer. Yes, there IS something bothering me. My wife is having a biopsy and it doesn't look good. She's stronger than me and told me that I would be better off going to work. So I'm here, but not really."

I replied, "I'm very sorry to hear that. And maybe you shouldn't be here."

He sat back in his chair, took a breath and said, "Nope. She's right. I do need to be here. Ok, you have my undivided attention plus your full 20 minutes."

The Point of the Story:

Do not focus on what you are going to get out of the person, because inside every person is a real person who is just as afraid or nervous or in need of empathy as anyone else. If you ignore that person's feelings, you'll keep hitting the same brick wall. Your role is to make the person feel "felt." Try and put yourself in that person's shoes and make it your job to find out what is causing the person to feel this way and what needs to be different for the person to feel better and achieve more.

The more you try to convince people that you're brilliant, charming, talented, or what you have to offer them is, the more likely they will consider you, your product or service to be boring and you in particular, self-centered. Trying to make yourself sound interesting, especially when talking to people who are secure in their own interestingness. They don't need to hear about your life, they have a pretty interesting life already. It's not about you, it's about them. (Much like those Christmas cards/Letters you get from people who tell you all the great and many things they have done throughout the course of the year. Do you really care? Do they ever ask about you? Do they even mention anything that pertains to you in one of those letters? Isn't really all about them?)

If you are going to be interested in someone, do it with sincerity. Don't fake it or just read through your lines. Each of us is a surprise to everyone else. Find out what kind of a surprise this person is. And you do that by asking engaging questions about the person.

On Time Management:

You have someone who is a Blurter. They just have to come into your office and announce the latest thing they've heard, read, thought, or are angry about. They are often long winded, they don't hesitate to interrupt you and they do it often. Here's what you do with them:

After hearing the first sentence or two, interrupt the person and say... "What you're saying is much too important for me to give it less than my undivided attention, which I can't give right now because I am in the middle of something I have to finish. So, what I'd like you to do is to come back in two hours when I will be able to give you all of my attention for five minutes and then I can help you with whatever is on your mind. But, in the meantime, think about what you want to tell me, what you'd like me to do, and whether it's possible to do, given the reality of our company. Also, think about whether it's fair to everyone it affects and whether it's in line with what we're trying to accomplish. Figure those things out and I'll be happy to help you to make it all happen."

Chances are that the person will NOT come back.

On Getting The Person to Exhale:

There are times we are forced in our lives to hold our ground or run. It isn't always situations that cause it. Some people are just so incorrigible to make us choose one or the other. But should you have the nerve to hold your ground, lock on the person's eyes and look right into them... then ask "How bad does it get in there?" S/he may answer, "You don't want to know." Your response can be "You're probably right, I don't want to know. But unless someone other than you knows and knows soon, you're going to go crazy." With that, do not lose your lock on his eyes and await a response. It may surprise you in a good way!

What you are looking to do is to get the person to uncross their arms... Both the physical and mental ones. Give the person plenty of time to express what they are feeling. Do not interrupt them. Next, do not take issue with anything the person says. Do not debate them. By the time s/he finishes, you will both be exhausted and spent. DO NOT TALK. It's still his or her turn, so wait. The person is too exhausted to listen, so pause and say, "Tell me more." This shows that you were listening and heard what really bothered them. By not debating or taking issue with him or her, you will have allowed them to exhale, let their guard down and let go of his or her distress. The trick here is to allow it happen. This technique also works with kids. Ask your son or daughter:

- What's the most frustrated you have ever felt with your mom/dad or me?
- How bad was it for you?
- What did it make you want to do?
- What did you do?
- I'm sorry, I didn't know it was that bad.

On Presenting Yourself:

Sometimes people perceive to be something we are or we are not. For example, you may be a laid back, easy-going person in most cases, but there is a part of you, that is seldom seen, that is a true Killer. Let's say someone wants to hire you but feels you are too soft for the position. KNOW YOURSELF. Know yourself well enough to address this upfront and right from the git go BEFORE it is made a topic of discussion. It is better that you voluntarily and proactively change the other party's perspective than to have to do it defensively. Its called dissonance. It makes people go from What can this person do for me? To What is this person planning on doing TO me?

The greatest single cause of dissonance is the fact that people behave their worst when they feel most powerless. So, when a man or woman is yelling at a partner, or when a child and parent are yelling at each other, or when a boss is yelling at a subordinate, or when a customer is yelling at a customer service person, it's because the person who is yelling feels that he or she isn't being hear or considered. The yeller feels powerless and scared, not intimidating. (??? I really don't agree with this.)

The Ten Most Common Misperceptions that cause dissonance:

Believing You Are

When Others See You As

Shrewd
Confident
Humorous
Energetic
Passionate
Strong
Detailed
Quiet
Sensitive
Forthright

Sly
Arrogant
Inappropriate
Hyper
Impulsive
Rigid
Nitpicking
Passive or Indecisive
Needy
Opinionated

The next time you feel an argument coming on, nip in the bud by saying: Time Out. Right now I feel like you are attacking me, while I'm sure you feel like I'm attacking you. When in fact, all we are doing is defending our own positions. Can we start fresh and take the tension out of the air?

Some Great Sales Question to Ask:

Q: What's something that would be impossible to do, but if you could do it, would dramatically increase your success?

A: If I could just do _____. But that's impossible.

Q: Ok. What would make it impossible?

You may come across someone who is stuck in a career or stuck on a problem. Just ask them, What is something that would be impossible, but if you could do it, would rapidly accelerate your career or help to fix the problem? Or, ... would dramatically increase your sales?

Shifting Another Person from Resistance to Listening
Going from Nobody Understands to YOU Understand!

"I'll bet you feel that nobody knows what it's like to be scared that you can't pull this project off. And I'll bet that you're upset because you think we're all feeling let down by you. What's more, I'll bet you feel that nobody can possibly understand how hard it is to deal with all the stuff that's happening in your life."

"That's it! I can't take your rules!! I quit!!!"

"Let's just talk for a minute. You know, I'll bet you feel that nobody knows what it's like to feel suffocated by the rules we ask you to follow. And, I bet you're angry because

you think we can't understand how hard it is for you right now to be what you consider stuck in this situation. What's more, I'll bet you feel that we don't have any idea the kind of pressure you are under or the really tough decisions you're trying to make in your life right now."

The goal here is to get the person to open up and talk.

On Resolving a Three Person Dilemma:

So, Joan, if I were to ask Harry why he thinks this meeting is just going to be a waste of time and money, what would he say? Please put yourself in Harry's shoes and tell me why he thinks this meeting is a waste of time and won't accomplish anything."

Guaranteed, I now have both Joan's and Harry's attention, as well as Robert's, the third person whose interest I have just piqued!

Joan Answers... and now I ask:

"And, if I were to ask Harry how frustrated that makes him feel, what would you say?"

Now I turn to Robert: "Robert, if I were to ask you what frustrates Joan most about how you deal with the situation with Harry, what would she say?"

All three are glued and tuned in!!

Robert responds. I then ask him: And if I asked Joan how that made her feel, what would she say?"

Now I turn to Harry, who is the primary reason for the three being in the position they are because he is the key player in the triumvirate, and ask: Harry, if I were to ask your mom and dad whether they are more disappointed and frustrated with you or worried about you, what would they say?"

And with that, we have everyone talking with the truth on the table.

Empathy and Anger cannot exist at the same time. Let one in and the other has to go. So, when you shift a blamer into empathy, you stop the person's angry ranting dead in its tracks.

Scenario:

Person A. "I understand there's a problem."

Person B. "Hell, yes there's a problem. She didn't give me enough time or information."

Person C. "Don't blame me for this mess!!"

Ask Person B, "If I were to ask Person C what frustrates him most about working with you, what would he say?"

Get the answer and ask the same question of Person C about Person B.

"And how does that make her feel?"

Do Not Interject Your Own Feelings. Your goal is get two people to mirror one another, and they can't do that if you are standing between them. Facilitate, don't but in!!

Also, you are not trying to solve the problem, you are merely shifting people to a place where THEY can solve the problem, as well as the next one after that.

Using Reverse Play to Get More Out of a Person:

You are meeting with a person who is not meeting expectations and falling behind. The person thinks you are going to tell him everything he is doing wrong. Instead say, "You're probably waiting for me to lay out a list of complaints, like I usually do. However, I was thinking about the reasons You might be disappointed in Me. You're probably afraid to tell me about these things, because you figure I'll get defensive."

From here, lay out the three things you suspect disappoint the person most about you. Then ask if this is true. If not, what ARE the things that most frustrate you about me? And how much do these things bother you?

After you get your answers, thank them and say, I didn't know and I guess I didn't want to know these things. I'm sorry and I will try to do better in the future. Then stop!

If the person asks, Is there anything else, say No. that's all I wanted to know. Thank you.

By apologizing yourself, you shift a person out of a defensive mode and cause the person to mirror your humility.

Do You Really Believe That!?!

The trick is to ask this very question in a non-hostile way. Your intent is not to antagonize the other person, but to make the person stop and realize, “I really am making a mountain out of a mole hill. All you need to begin is to ask this first question, followed up by a second one.

The Stipulation Gambit: Neutralize your weak points by putting them out there first.

Guy goes in for an interview and he has a stuttering problem. BEFORE the interview begins, explain that you stutter and it may occur during this interview. That you have no control over it and you have no idea if or when it hits. That it can even get so bad as to prevent you from speaking at all. This way, should it happen, there are NO surprises, no one is embarrassed and everyone is good with it.

As a consultant...I sometimes have to fight an uphill battle of skepticism. To counter this, I can say: *“I am an experienced business consultant and no, I don’t have an MBA or a PhD. I know that some of you believe that without these credentials, I must not know what I’m doing. But here are some of the things I’ve learned to do in my career. I’ve assisted grown children in successfully taking over and running the family business. I’ve gotten partners who didn’t speak to one another and communicated only by hand written notes, to sell the company before totally destroying it. I’ve turned companies around to the point of where they could be sold and were. I have had to deal with a dying owner transitioning the company before his death. I have successfully dealt with some very difficult, confident, and stubborn self-made men and women. I have had to turn the culture around of some nasty companies that included drug abuse, drug sales, psychopathic and sociopathic heirs, thievery, skimming and other malfeasances. I have had to change the culture and mindset of people that included members of the Teamsters and SEIU. So, I do know something about getting through to people, turning them around and turning companies around. And I would imagine that getting through to people is something you need to do every day.”*

Another situation you can find yourself in as a consultant is being called in with the person or people you are speaking with, sitting like jurists, waiting for you to ask the standard questions. Instead, ask... You are thinking of hiring me because you want to do What _____? And the reason you want to do that is because _____???

Moving a Person from Resistance to Listening

“Tell me, which one of your (friends, employees, managers) do you think is the most likely to get into big trouble some day?”

“What!?!”

“I was just wondering which of your _____ takes too many chances and will probably get into major problems sometime – and more importantly, what makes you think it will be that particular person?”

You are not judging here. You are merely listening. You are getting the person to open up and talk. Do Not Lecture. Just Listen. After the person answers the last question, ask one last question:

“If that happens, what will you probably do?”

The purpose of this exercise is to allow one revelation to lead to another without your getting in the way. You are merely opening doors for the person to walk through. You do not want to create a bait and switch where you lure someone into a conversation and then turn it into a lecture. It is meant to explore ways to make things go right in the future, not dwell on or bring up the past.

Transforming Relationships.

When you are asked at an interview if you have any questions, say Yes and ask this one:

“I’d like you to imagine it’s a year from now, and you are reviewing the people you’ve hired this past year – and when it comes to this position, they say ‘Get us ten more like that one. That person was the best hires we’ve had in a long time.’ Can you tell me what that person did for her to and you to get such a rave review?”

The problem is that we no longer relate to one another. We transact. We negotiate everything. Everyone appears to be in a quid pro quo relationship. Transacting does not open the mind or the heart. It’s like an encounter with your ATM. We need to move from transacting to relating with one another. We need to be asking questions of each other that open our minds and open our hearts. We need to become interested in one another as human beings.

For example... you call on a doctor and at the end of the conversation, ask him or her if you might ask them but one more question. Then ask:

“I’ve heard from many physicians that it’s not as much fun as it used to be and that you docs have to work longer and harder just to keep up. I know you and your team here work very hard, and I just wanted to know if it’s still fun for you to be a doctor?”

What Questions Would Make You Look Up?

The next time you catch yourself running on that transactional hamster wheel, try this. Stop what you're doing and sit down. Take a breath. And say to yourself: "*What would I like to be doing with my life this time next year? What do I need more of and what do I need less of in my life right now? If my kids looked at me twenty years from now, what would make them proud of me?*"

When You Don't Get the Job:

I'm just wondering if you could tell me something... the question I failed to ask or the issue I didn't address that would have made you feel differently was _____?

You are now trying to get them to re-open your case and for you to look for your next opening. Until you get a final NO, keep pitching because the game ain't over, yet!!

On Good Management:

"Good Management consists of showing average people how to do the work of superior people." John D. Rockefeller