

# LISTENING

Can you tell when someone is truly listening or when they are rehearsing in their head what they are going to say next?

When others speak are you constantly comparing yourself to them, trying to figure out what the other person is really thinking, or are you daydreaming when something they say triggers a chain of associated thoughts and stories?

Are you quick to problem solve and offer advice before listening to the speaker's full story? Do you change the subject or go to lengths to be right or avoid being wrong? Perhaps you listen but placate the speaker by agreeing to their every claim.

These are listening roadblocks we all experience in some way or another. True listening is a skill that can be developed with the help of mindful awareness.

Being aware of our thoughts as we listen can

begin the self-awareness journey. Becoming mindful of our body's sensations (like the breath) can aid the slowing down of our thoughts.

Slowing down and letting go of our thoughts may involve letting go of the importance we put on our response to the speaker. This frees up our energy and attention so that it can be invested in the speaker's story instead.

Paying attention to how our body responds to the narration keeps us in touch with ourselves in a way that we can still offer self-care and continue to listen.

Mindful listening requires the use of our many senses. Become aware of sounds and vocal inflections, notice body language, and feel empathetic emotions.

Mindful listening can be used in any situation from conversations with a friend over the phone to trauma counselling.

**Exercise - With a partner, talk for 2 minutes (partner is silent), then switch and listen for 2 minutes. Be aware of your body's responses to the speaker's story.**