

Relationship Advice: Listen With Your Heart



By Debbie Ceresa from [Divorce Support Center](#)

How many times have you said this to your partner? “You never hear what I say! Aren’t you listening to me?” Or maybe they’ve accused you of not hearing or remembering what was said. The longtime celebrity couple Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn credit listening as a secret to a successful relationship. “Learn to listen and live in the moment. Don’t over plan your future; focus on being the best partner you can be in the present moment, and the rest will follow.” Listening is key to building and maintaining a healthy relationship, but it’s not easy. The skills of a good listener require dedication and a heart with ears. You must have the ability to give yourself totally to the person who is talking. It’s not easy because we

are constantly inundated with outside distractions, such as our thoughts, cell phones, and social media. In his book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, Jon Kabat-Zinn, professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, defines mindfulness, or active listening, as paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. We listen to understand, to obtain information, and for enjoyment, but researchers and [relationship experts](#) at the University of Minnesota found that “the average person only remembers half of what he or she has immediately heard said by another person.” Over time, that result can have a devastating effect on your relationships. A key factor in a successful relationship is to become a pro in active listening. Active listeners make an effort to hear what has been said and understand the message. To accomplish this, you must master four of these dating tips.

Relationship Advice On Active Listening

1. Create a listening ritual and space. Find a comfortable place to sit and listen to each other, particularly when the conversation is important. Your special place should be free of distractions thereby giving yourselves total attention to each other. Unplug, de-clutter, shut the door, do whatever it takes for some priceless listening time. My husband and I have created a morning coffee time on our patio. The morning sounds of birds, the tranquility of mountains in the distance, and the early neighborhood sounds provide us with a peaceful space to share stories daily.

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2. Pay attention. Give yourself to the speaker with a nod of your head, a slight gesture, or smile. Maintaining eye contact

demonstrates you are in the moment. Most importantly, try to focus on hearing with your heart. “Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you’d have preferred to talk,” said relationship expert Doug Larson.

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3. Put yourself in your partner’s shoes. Don’t be afraid to be empathic. Recognizing your partner’s perspective will give you the opportunity to think beyond yourself. You’ll be surprised as you discover their hopes, dreams, fears and expectations. These discoveries will lead to you honing in on your listening skills as you begin to know your partner more intimately.

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4. Collect moments and be prepared to retell the story. When your partner shares a story with you, it’s important to them. The story is their moment, and it has now become yours. How many times have you and a friend retold the story of running through the airport together or the time you celebrated your anniversary at a special restaurant? “One of the best ways to remember something better is to know that you are going to tell what you learned to someone else,” said writer Henrik Edberg. “Then you’ll be more alert, naturally start asking more questions to understand and what is said – in my experience – simply seems to stick better.” My best relationship advice is to learn from retelling your special moments, remember the eye contact, gestures, and emotions. With so many distractions vying for our time, the ability to listen is a quality often longed for in today’s relationships. By creating the ideal atmosphere, paying attention, showing empathy for our partner, and being fully engaged in listening, you can show your loved one how much you care by not saying a word.

Debbie is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist. She is an author, an inspirational speaker, and a relationship expert. For more information about and articles by our Divorce Support Center relationship experts, click [here](#).