

IDENTIFYING ROADBLOCKS TO LISTENING

Below are descriptions of several barriers to more effective listening. Review the list and circle those that you struggle with yourself.

Ordering, directing, or commanding

Direction is given with a voice of authority. The words may be phrased and spoken in a way that communicates that the speaker is the expert.

Warning, cautioning, or threatening

These statements carry an overt or covert threat of negative consequences. For example, "If you don't stop, you are going to die."

Giving advice, making suggestions, or providing solutions prematurely or when unsolicited

The message recommends a course of action based on your knowledge and personal experience. These recommendations often begin with phrases like "What I would do is..."

Persuading with logic, arguing, or lecturing

The underlying assumption of these messages is that the client has not reasoned through the problem adequately and needs help to do so.

Moralizing, preaching, or telling people what they should do

These statements contain such words as "should" or "ought," which imply or directly convey negative judgment.

Judging, criticizing, disagreeing, or blaming

These messages imply that something is wrong with the client or with what the client has said.

Agreeing, approving, or praising

Praise or approval can be an obstacle if the message sanctions or implies agreement with whatever the client has said or if the praise is given too often or in general terms, like "great job."

Shaming, ridiculing, or labeling

These statements express disapproval and intent to correct a specific behavior or attitude.

Interpreting or analyzing

You may be tempted to impose your own interpretations on a client's statement and to find some hidden, analytical meaning.

Reassuring, sympathizing, or consoling

It is human nature to want to reassure someone who is in pain; however, sympathy is not the same as empathy.

Questioning or probing

Although you may ask questions to learn more about the client, the underlying message is that you might find the right answer to all the client's problems if enough questions are asked.

Avoiding, distracting, humoring, or changing the subject

Although shifting the focus or using humor may be helpful at times, it can also be a distraction and disrupt the communication.