LEVELS OF LISTENING

LESS EMPATHETIC, LESS EFFECTIVE LISTENING STYLES:

Personal Focus: Listening to words but focusing primarily on what they mean to you.

- **Surface Listening**: pretending to listen while thinking about something else
- **Autobiographical Listening**: shifting the focus from the speaker to yourself
- **Interruptive Listening**: listening primarily to find a moment when you can jump in to say what's on your mind

Problem-Focused: Listening by focusing sharply on the words and less on the meaning and/or context.

- **Editorial Listening**: interrupting to correct or revise the speaker's words or to finish his/her sentences
- **Solution Listening**: listening with the intention of solving the speaker's problem, offering advice, and/or providing answers

A MORE EMPATHETIC AND MORE EFFECTIVE LISTENING STYLE:

Speaker-Focused, Deep Listening: Paying full attention to the meaning of the speaker's words, with an acute sense of context: When you are listening deeply, you aim to understand rather than to solve, react, or judge. You reside in the moment, focus intently on your colleague’s verbal and non-verbal cues, and listen non-judgmentally.

To listen deeply:

Try to:
- Focus on the speaker
- Have a quiet mind
- Notice non-verbal communications
- Use silence
- Reflect back to the speaker his/her feelings and values
- Summarize and paraphrase

Try not to:
- Shift the focus from the speaker to yourself
- Entertain self-serving curiosity
- Contemplate whether the speaker is “right” or “wrong”
- Focus on your next question or comment
- Think about how you would solve the speaker's problem(s)
- Interrupt to correct the speaker or to finish his/her sentences

To use listen deeply more often, consider which less productive, listener-focused categories of listening you need to work on. For those, reflect on characteristics of situations when you’re most likely to fall back on these unproductive types of listening (topic, setting, interaction type or length of conversation, etc.). Then, when you find yourself in those settings, practice deep listening, using the “Try to” suggestions.

*Adapted from the work of Deandra Little and Michael Palmer, Teaching Resource Center, U.Va.*