

Active Listening – Transition in the mode of operation



English

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ABSTRACT

Active listening and effective communication has been the need of any millennium. Over time, the knowledge transfer has brought us to the present day where the listening skill plays a vital role. Rather than mere hearing, active listening improves the overall comprehensive ability. Today, life at any level, from beginner to trainer, from purchaser to manufacturer, from technology to modernization etc., have become very rapid paced and demanding. So, Active listening is a key discriminating aspect which is of very high demand. This paper attempts to analyze active listening skill and also it enunciates how transition in the mode of operation happens to each individual in varied stages of their life.

Exploring and understanding the following couplet from Thirukkural, will shed sufficient light on how Listening leads to flourish Knowledge.

“Selvathul Selvam Sevichelvam

Achselvam Selvathul Ellam Thalai”.

So before we step into the actual topic, the above thirukkural is brushed up in order to be informative to individuals who are hearing it for the first time.

“Selvathul Selvam”, means supreme amongst all wealth, “Sevichelvam” means hearing ability or the listening ability that is the wealth amongst all wealth one possess. When we hear the term wealth, the first thing that goes into our mind is assets, monetary and materialistic stuff, and the knowledge and value we carry. Here in Thirukkural, Thiruvalluvar is quoting a sense organ, the physical-hearing or the listening skill, that we possess from our birth as the greatest wealth of all. The act of mere hearing and the art of listening are not same. In the first case, it is just a physical process where one’s sensory organ is in action but in the second one’s intelligence too plays an active role in grasping what is being communicated. So, here, wherever it is said listening, it means active listening and not mere hearing.

According to Dr. Thomas Armstrong, the Executive Director of the American Institute for Learning and Human Development, there are Twelve Stages for Human Life Cycle.

1. Prebirth: Potential
2. Birth: Hope
3. Infancy (Ages 0-3): Vitality
4. Early Childhood (Ages 3-6): Playfulness
5. Middle Childhood (Ages 6-8): Imagination
6. Late Childhood (Ages 9-11): Ingenuity
7. Adolescence (Ages 12-20): Passion
8. Early Adulthood (Ages 20-35): Enterprise
9. Midlife (Ages 35-50): Contemplation
10. Mature Adulthood (Ages 50-80): Benevolence
11. Late Adulthood (Age 80+): Wisdom
12. Death & Dying: Life

In this arena, the major group falls in the 8th stage of life. In all these years everything was tailor made for the individual. The stage and platform was set, depending on the know-how of the people around us, with our parents and teachers along with our friends playing a pivotal role in molding us. All these years, right from the kindergarten days till now, the knowledge transfer that happened to the rest of one’s peers came to the individual too but how well one listened to them, conceived them, evaluated and understood them made one what the individual is. If one

make a relative comparison of how one’s early day buddies’ life unwounded to how it happened to the individual, the determining factor would have been how good a listener one was.

If we check the way we functioned all these years would have been like:

- Hearing.
- Attending.
- Understanding.
- Remembering.
- Evaluating.
- Responding.

This mode of operation is deep rooted in us that switching over are going to be a skill by itself. One of the most idealistic condition in the stage before is, on a major scale the authenticity of the source of information that flows to us is reliable. Most of them would have been time tested and proven. So we just need to act a big antenna that receives all the information and convert it into knowledge and store it in our intellect. The platform on which all these happen is our listening ability. Unless voluntarily drifted, the flow chart is so organized that the possibility of being misguided is very limited. All these years, it would have been pretty obvious that the most effective and easy way for grasping knowledge and being effective was to harness the skill of listening and effectively churning it to yield desired output. So knowingly or unknowingly, our listening ability has paved the path to what we are here today.

As we move on to the Enterprise mode where we are going to make a mark for ourselves, these are no more tailor made. We have to set the stage, script the show, play the character, and progress as an individual. Our mode of operation change from the above in a slightly different degree but often it is failed to understand. Since the stage is different, where each and everyone have own worries to be taken care of, we get into a mode where we listen and instead of getting to the granularity of understanding and responding, we start to react. Listening and responding has the intelligence guiding you, all the knowledge that you gained over span will come handy and direct you properly whereas when you listen and react, the intelligence chamber is shut down and it will be instinct driven. So the first and foremost suggestion to improve the listening ability or skill is to make your conscious clearly understand that, you are listening to respond and not to react.

Now the next important way to function as we move into the corporate field is the change the pattern of operation on information. We would have big dreams in as we take flight into this corporate segment. If you look at the hierarchy of operation in corporate field it is pretty vast and each and every role has its

own importance within the sectors.

We may too visualize ourselves taking different prominent roles at the higher grades over the years. But we have to have the baby steps before scaling the heights. And these baby steps are going to be very important as they ensure that we are sufficiently equipped to do justice at the higher level.

The need for listening all these days were unidirectional, accumulate knowledge and be an intellect. Whereas going forward it changes, it is like collecting information, processing it with our knowledge and intelligence and creating optimum output. At every stage, listening will act as an important medium of operation for effective results. The key to unlock that skill is deep within us, it is engraved in our attitude towards our own destiny. Now in this stage, mode of operation will be as follows.

- Active Listening.
- Determine the problem.
- Evaluate.
- Identify Options
- Select Best Option.
- Engage and Yield Result

There are a lot of people directly and indirectly involved in any action that we are involved with. Hence it becomes very important to have all the aspects taken into consideration and acted up on, which will help in getting the best results and avoid reworks. So to grasp the knowledge of the requirements and to clarify, the primary medium to get the information from the internal customers who are involved with the need and the most prominent means of operation will be communication and the most effective communication will be direct where a lot of information sharing needs to happen, and thus a lot of active listening too.

Now looking at the importance of having a good listening skill are as follows:

- Gain Information
- Develop Trust
- Maintain Reputation
- Reduce Conflict
- Motivate Employees

As you go up the ladder in a corporate set up, the better you have these skills the successful a leader you would be and the journey in accomplishing your vision would be pretty interesting and engaging.

Before concluding, coming back to what Thiruvalluvar said in his Kural, the gift of ears does not manifest in its true form unless the organ is put to effective use. The beauty of knowledge is the more one learns and acquire knowledge, the more capable one becomes to acquire material and spiritual wealth. With material wealth one can nurture self and others, give and earn fame.

With knowledge comes discrimination, the ability to choose right from wrong, to distinguish well versus evil and the ability to act in good faith. This ability to distinguish helps make the choice of breaking or keeping a friendship. Knowledge is the key that can open doors to wealth, fame, happiness and everlasting friendship. So, when talking about knowledge, we have already seen how much our listening ability plays a crucial role, i.e. Sevichelvam because the fact remains that one gains knowledge by listening. Even a man without the gift of sight can learn with the gift of hearing. At least half the knowledge we acquire is by using our sense of hearing. An ardent speaker can teach millions but for the ardent speaker to learn, he must listen! Hence harnessing

the listening skill is ultimate to scale up the heights in life!

REFERENCES

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