

The Value of Listening

One of the very important marks of an effective leader is the practiced art of listening.

Edgar Watson Howe, an author and newspaper/magazine editor who lived from 1853 to 1937, was widely acclaimed for his wit in his editorials. He once joked, “No man would listen to you talk if he didn’t know it was his turn next.”

Unfortunately, Howe accurately described the way too many people approach communication – they’re too busy waiting for their turn to really listen to others.

But people of influence understand the incredible value of becoming a good listener.

For example, when Lyndon B. Johnson was a junior senator from Texas, he kept a sign on his office wall that read, “You ain’t learnin’ nothin’ when you’re doin’ all the talkin’.”

And Woodrow Wilson, the 28th American president, once said, “The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.”

John C. Maxwell, author and internationally recognized expert on leadership development, wrote in his book, *The Maxwell Daily Reader*, “The ability to skillfully listen is one key to gaining influence with others.” He listed these benefits: Listening ...

- Shows respect.
- Builds relationships.
- Increases knowledge.
- Generates ideas.
- Builds loyalty.



At first glance, listening to others may appear to benefit them, Maxwell added. “But when you become a good listener, you put yourself in a position to help yourself, too. You have the ability to develop strong relationships, gather valuable information, and increase your understanding of yourself and others.”

Maxwell’s advice is proven out every day in the work of Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home. The care we provide to our residents absolutely depends on good communication; in particular, listening closely to what our residents and family members are saying to us. And equally critical is what caregivers are saying to each other in order to deliver the finest service possible to our customers.

So start out today by focusing on listening to others.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter