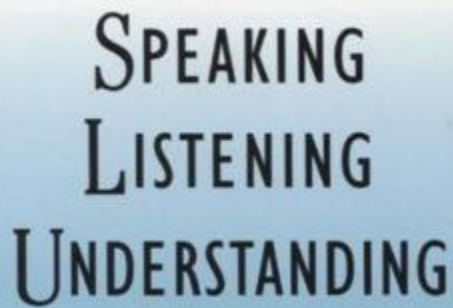


## Listen While You Speak



SPEAKING  
LISTENING  
UNDERSTANDING

Our learning experiences are ever present in our lives. Some experiences happen when we are very young like walking and talking. Seems we just get the hang of talking we have to learn when to listen and refrain from speaking. Unlike learning to talk and walk this seems to be a lifetime skill constantly being refined and improved upon with experience.

We are constantly evaluating when it is the right time to speak against when we should be listening. When we do choose to speak, how do we speak with clear, deliberate, and focused speech in order to prevent miscommunication? Even when we do our best there are those times when those we are conversing with are not listening with the intention of understanding what we are saying. Maybe they are distracted; maybe they are busy thinking about what they want to say, or maybe they don't really care for what we are saying.

When we speak and when we stay silent can be dictated by following the nuances of social etiquette, or can be prompted by intense personal emotions. No matter the why, we are in a constant state of flux. Do I open my mouth? Or do I keep it closed? Maybe you have caught yourself on occasions opening your mouth, making a split decision, and then closing your mouth back up. Maybe you have caught someone doing the exact same thing. Sometimes it can be a fine line of discretion.

There are times when your heart is content with the silence you keep. At other times it aches with the reality that you didn't speak up. Then there are the times that your heart reverberates so loudly the sounds are spewing forward out of your mouth. (Hopefully for an important reason; regrettably when it hurts.) Day to day, we do our best. That is the most we can do.

There are no sure fire rules to follow to see you through every situation although there may be a few. (Too few; you'll think.)

## "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak..."

- Speak up when it is important to share with another how you truly feel. Don't allow uncomfortable feelings to build up waiting for explosion points.
- Speak up when you can influence something for the better—for yourself, for someone else, for a group, for the community, and so on. Your voice matters. (Think compound ripple effect)
- Speak up when the opportunity arises for you to do so. Don't leave yourself muttering, "I should have told them..." (Fill in the blank).
- Don't be shy to offer your true opinion when someone asks for it. You may be passing up another golden opportunity.

## ...Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."

### Winston Churchill

- Stay silent in order to learn from another. Stay silent in order to listen to what others have to say. Give others the opportunity to express themselves.
- Stay silent when you have nothing to say. Sometimes the best conversation is conducted in silence.
- Wait to speak until you are clear in the presentation of your thoughts.
- Resist sharing things you (or someone else) do not want to reveal to others.
- Stop talking when in the presence of a non-listener, talking is futile. Stop talking when enough has been said.

*With Gratitude,*

*Kai*