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**TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY**  
**Empowering Masonic Leaders**

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I N T U I T I V E O P T I O N S

# **Becoming a Highly Effective Listener**

**Skills: Paraphrase,  
Perception Check, Behavior  
Description, Productive  
Questions,  
& Fogging**

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**I KNOW THAT  
YOU BELIEVE YOU  
UNDERSTOOD WHAT  
YOU THINK I SAID,  
BUT  
I AM NOT SURE  
YOU REALIZE THAT  
WHAT YOU HEARD  
IS NOT  
WHAT I MEANT.**

## **LISTENING SKILLS**

*We talk at 120 to 180 words per minute (conversationally)*

*We can listen ( & process) from 400 to 800 words per minute*

*In this session we will learn to use the difference, “lag time” to improve our ability to receive the correct message*

*Lag time means that you have time left over in your head to think, while listening*

*Our culture does not teach us how to listen  
- it teaches us how to talk*

*Listening is responding to the other person’s message*

*We usually use our lag time unproductively  
- such as jumping on the defensive*

*These exercises are designed to retrain your lag time to be more productive*

**PARAPHRASE:** Restating, in your own words (not parroting), the **content** of the speaker’s verbal communication.

1. To determine whether you have accurately received the verbal message(s) sent to you.
2. To give the speaker the opportunity to correct you if your paraphrase is incorrect, clearing up any misunderstanding.

3. To demonstrate, through behavior, that you are interested in what the speaker is telling you.

**Use their key words.**  
**The paraphrase should be no longer than the original statement.**

Paraphrase stems:

- I understood you to say that . . .
- You're telling me that . . .
- You are saying that . . .
- Let me repeat what I'm hearing . . .
- Let me check to see if I am getting this correctly

Example:

"No one in this Lodge is concerned about its declining membership. We have asked a number of people to contact inactive members and not one seemed interested."

"Getting no response to your request for people to contact inactive members leads you to believe that no one is concerned about the decline in the lodge's membership."

**PERCEPTION CHECK:** Checking out your perception (guess) about what the speaker is experiencing (feeling / emotion) by responding to the messages being sent to you. These include words, voice tone and body language.

The perception check is a statement, which includes tentative language and one or more feeling words, followed by a question to check its accuracy.

However, before you can make the statement, you must “pick up” a clue from the person’s words, tone and/or body language and make a guess (in your mind) of a feeling the other person might be experiencing. That is the perception. The perception belongs to the listener and through this skill, then “checks” it out.

**Pattern: Tentative stem + name the feeling + ask a question**

A. Tentative stems for perception checking:

- I get the impression that . . .
- It seems to me that . . .
- I’m wondering if . . .
- It sounds to me as if . . .
- Is it possible that . . .
- I have a hunch that . . .
- I sense that . . .
- I get the feeling that . . .

B. Name the feeling that you perceive they are experiencing.

C. Ask a question, such as, “Am I correct?” “Is that right?”

Example:

“It sounds to me as if you were delighted with the response to your planning session last month. Right?”

“I sense that your experience has cause you to feel a discouraged about being involved in community service projects. Is that right?”

***Perception checks should always be done with a neutral or caring tone of voice.***

**BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION:** Describing specific, observable actions of others without making inferences such as accusations, judgments, or name calling. All behaviors of communication can be described - words, tone, and body movement.

This is the Sgt. Joe Friday skill: Just the FACTS, no inferences.

## Behavior Description VS. Inferences

Tom left the meeting 30 minutes early	NOT	Tom is irresponsible. Tom was angry.
Several people were whispering as the meeting resumed.	NOT	The whole group was whispering about Tom when the meeting resumed.
The chairman dropped his pencil, shuffled papers and cleared his throat as he said, "This meeting is called to order."	NOT	The chairman was obviously annoyed and frustrated as he called the meeting to order.

Example:

**(Words)** Tom said, "I can no longer handle this job." (direct quotation)

**(Tone)** As he spoke, his voice quivered and grew louder.

**(Body movement/physical changes)** His face flushed as he turned and walked out of the room.

**PRODUCTIVE QUESTIONS:** The ability to ask questions based on "free information" (ideas or feeling), incomplete thoughts, and responses to other questions you have asked.

Productive questions are the fuel for perpetuating the conversation.  
Productive questions can be used to gather data.

Follow up on:

- FREE INFORMATION. Information given to you for which you did not ask.
- DELETIONS. A deletion occurs when certain ideas or words are left out.
- DISTORTIONS. An overstatement: always, never, all, everyone, etc....

Example:

“Yes, I was involved with this lodge when it was really growing. In fact, I was very active then. But that was a long time ago, and both the lodge and I have gone through some changes since then.”

Productive Questions:

“In what ways were you active back then?”

“What kind of changes have there been for the lodge, . . . and for you?”

**FOGGING:** Agreeing with the truth in the speaker’s critical statement(s). You agree with only that which is true for you.

One of the quickest ways to defuse another person’s criticism is to agree with the truth in what they are saying. This response is called “fogging”. (A fog bank does not hit back when struck; it simply absorbs the blow.) It assumes that there is the possibility of truth in any critical statement – that it is important to listen for the element of truth and to agree with it. It is not agreeing with all that the critic says, but only with the part that may have some truth in it.

Fogging temporarily stops the critical cycle from beginning.  
Fogging can be generalized or it can identify a specific truth.

Some fogging stems:

- That's right . . .
- That's true . . .
- You're correct . . .
- It is true that . . .
- You're probably right . . .
- That's probably true . . .

Examples:

Critic: You don't write very good examples of these skills.

Fog: You're right. There is room for improvement in these examples.

Critic: The lodge members are very reluctant to accept any of my ideas for changing the annual fund raiser.

Fog: It's true that there are times when the lodge members are slow to accept new ideas and change.

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