

ROAD BLOCKS TO LISTENING

1. **COMPARING** – Comparing makes it hard to listen because you're always trying to assess who is smarter, more competent, more emotionally healthy – you or the other.
2. **MIND READING** – The mind reader doesn't pay much attention to what people say. In fact s/he often distrusts it. S/he's trying to figure out what the other person is really thinking and feeling.
3. **REHEARSING** – You don't have time to listen when you're rehearsing what to say. Your whole attention is on the preparation and crafting of your next comment.
4. **FILTERING** – When you filter, you listen to some things and not to others. You pay only enough attention to see if somebody's angry, or unhappy, or if you're in emotional danger.
5. **JUDGING** - Negative labels have enormous power. If you prejudge someone as stupid or nuts or unqualified, you don't pay much attention to what they say.
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6. **DREAMING** – You're half listening, and something the person says suddenly triggers a chain of private associations. Your neighbor says he's been laid off, and in a flash you're back to the scene where you got fired.
7. **IDENTIFYING** – You take everything a person tells you and refer it back to your own experience. They want to tell you about a toothache, but that reminds you of the time you had oral surgery.
8. **ADVISING** – You are the great problem-solver, ready with help and suggestions. You don't have to hear more than a few sentences before you begin searching for the right advice.
9. **SPARRING** – You argue and debate with people. The other person never feels heard because you're so quick to disagree.
10. **BEING RIGHT** – Being right means you will go any lengths (twist the facts, start shouting, make excuses or accusations, call up past sins) to avoid being wrong.
11. **DERAILING** – This is accomplished by suddenly changing the subject. You derail the train of conversation when you get bored or uncomfortable with the topic.
12. **PLACATING** – "Right..Right..Absolutely..I know..Really?" You want to be nice, pleasant, supportive. You want people to like you, so you agree with everything.

Adapted from McKay, Davis & Fanning, Messages: The communications skills book by Lincoln EAP 10.92