

## How Long Do I Have to Listen?

I've talked before about the importance of listening. It is a key skill to learn if you're really trying to engage clients and patients. But it isn't always clear what good listening means and this was made clear again the other day.

A client with a heart of gold is working to learn to be a more effective problem solver and coach to his colleagues. He has good questions and has really immersed himself in new ideas and philosophies so that he has more to offer. But he is still full of information instead of questions.

We were talking about a particular individual he is trying to help. My client is sure he knows what would be good for this colleague, but he is sincerely trying to build rapport by paying attention to what the person says. My client asked for a meeting to strategize about next steps and to look for potential pitfalls.

I decided to underline the need for careful listening and said, "Don't forget, you must listen until he says what he has to say."

My client replied, "Can I play solitaire on my computer while I listen?" He seemed to be kidding so I didn't respond. Then he asked in a sincere voice, "So how long do I really have to listen to him before telling him what I think?"

And there is the issue, isn't it? We can do what we have to, but it won't necessarily be based on true curiosity or respect for the other person's complete message. Listening isn't the same as hearing a voice. Listening is hearing multiple meanings and concerns.

There are tricks to getting better at listening. The payoff is better client and patient retention and referrals.

Are you ready to raise your game to a higher level? Give me a call to discuss how much you can learn in just a few sessions. Many of our clients feel they have earned back the cost in the first week.