

# DIALOGUE SKILLS: LISTENING CONTINUUM

A FRAMEWORK FOR EMPATHETIC LISTENING BY STEPHEN COVEY

## WHY

**Allows you to develop and enhance relationships with a stronger understanding of what is being conveyed.**

- Takes conversations beyond the basics and into new territory
- Creates space for evolving creativity and cultivating innovation
- Helps reduce misunderstandings
- Fosters trust and value for individuals by helping them feel completely heard and understood

## WHAT

**Helps leaders understand the various types of listening. Empathetic listening is where transformation takes place.**

First introduced in Stephen Covey's (1989) Seven Habits of Highly Effective People book, the model outlines five levels of listening— Ignoring, Pretend, Selective, Attentive, and Empathetic.

### Ignoring

*I'm here, but I'm not listening.*

Ignoring can be a good strategy in open plan offices to cut out the noise

### Pretend

*I'm here and I'm smiling and nodding like I hear you, but in truth my mind is elsewhere.*

This type of listening is common in large meetings or networking events or as part of small talk

### Selective

*I hear you, but I'm only really listening for the parts that align with my own agenda*

This is where we hear what we want to hear, and often with selective listening you'll have multiple parties talking over one and other to get their ideas in to the mix

### Attentive

*I hear you and I'm also noticing your non-verbal communication. I'm working hard to understand the drivers for what you're saying and how they align with my motivations so we can progress the conversation on common ground*

Effective conversations take place at level 4 listening however, it still comes from your own frame of reference

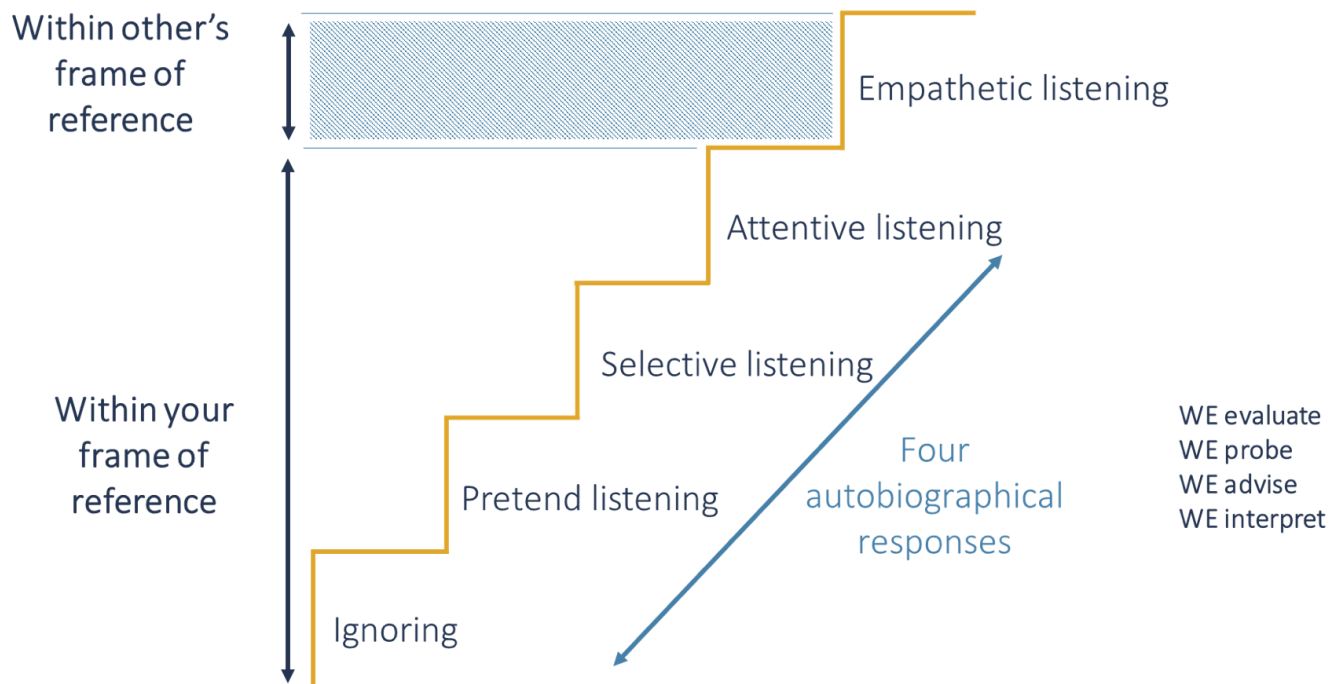
### Empathetic

*I hear you and I am in a complete space of curiosity, seeking to understand your point of view and your frame of reference*

Empathetic is when you step into the other person's frame of reference and seek to truly understand what is going on for them without your own bias in action

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Based on Stephen Covey (1989). Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. Simon & Shucster, NY, NY.

“MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO UNDERSTAND;  
THEY LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO REPLY.”

– STEPHEN COVEY

## HOW TO USE IT



**Explain the levels of listening to your team and the opportunities that become available when you can be in the space of empathetic listening.**

- Explore the model and test with the group how often you each feel like you are truly in a space of empathetic listening
- What does it take to step into another person's frame of reference and truly listen?
- What might start to shift in the team if we spend more time in empathetic listening?
- Powerful questions help you, as a listener, explore the other person's frame of reference in response to what they are saying

NOTE: We suggest you also explore the 'Dialogue Skills: Powerful Questions' content alongside this conversation