Common Listening Errors:

1. Pseudo-listening — nonverbal and verbal cues that you are listening but you really are not.

HOW DO YOU MAKE PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU'RE LISTENING WHEN YOU'RE NOT?

Say “uh huh,” nod, smile, or use other encouraging words like “really.”

2. Stage-hogging — when one person turns a conversation into a monologue and does not let others talk.

DO YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE?

Don’t assume that everyone who stage-hogs is a jerk — many victims of abuse will talk on and on to fill a silence, not to be rude.

3. Selective listening — listening for a topic you want to hear about.

Farmers will often have the radio on all the time. They screen out commercials, even most music — but as soon as the weather report comes on, they are at attention and don’t miss a word. Sports fans may listen for last night’s game scores. Teens may listen for the ‘ticket giveaway’ for their favorite band. The similarity in all these cases is the brain’s ability to block all information except what is desired.

4. Assimilate to prior messages — interpreting messages based on past messages common to the situation.

WHAT CONCEPT RELATED TO PERCEPTION IS ACTIVE HERE?

For example, a young girl went out to the bus the morning of the big speech contest at school. She was used to hearing her mom yell, "Did you get your hat and mittens?" as she ran to the bus. That morning the mom yelled, "Did you get your speech?" as the girl ran to the bus. The girl yelled, “Yeah!” assuming her mother said, “Did you get your hat and mittens?” as she usually did. Later that day, the girl realized she didn’t have her speech and had to call her mother to bring it to her. When the mother handed the girl the speech, she said, “Why did you tell me you had it when I asked?”

HAVE YOU EVER DONE THIS? WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

5. Insulated listening — not hearing people talk or not hearing topics you don't want to hear.

Example: A student blocks out his peer’s taunts.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM SELECTIVE LISTENING?

6. Defensive listening — some people see everything as a personal attack.

KNOW ANYONE WHO TAKES EVERYTHING PERSONALLY? HOW DOES SELF CONCEPT AFFECT OUR LISTENING?

You might say “nice hair cut” and really mean it but the person you’re speaking to might take it as a sarcastic comment and ask, “Why are you picking on me?”

7. Ambushing — listen only to collect data for an attack (often ignoring most of the message and focusing on a single item).

A conversation between two roommates about getting a second cat:

“I don't want to get another cat, although Quiz needs company, it’s not worth the litter box hassle, it might hurt Quiz’s feelings, and it will be expensive.”

“Ah, but you agree Quiz really needs the company since we're gone so much of the day?”

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM CRITICAL LISTENING?

8. Insensitive listening — takes everything literally, doesn't pick up nonverbal cues like tone of voice or facial expressions.

COULD THIS TIE INTO SEXUAL HARASSMENT? HAVE YOU BEEN THE VICTIM OF AN INSENSITIVE LISTENER?

You might say "YEAH, RUSH LIMBAUGH IS MY HERO TOO" in a sarcastic tone of voice but the listener launches into a discussion of why Limbaugh is the future of the Republican party.