



Disclaimer: These are rough notes we use to prep for the show. Please excuse typos, etc.

Simple Life Together Episode 44: What We Got Here Is Failure To Communicate (music)

“Hi and welcome to Simple Life Together, a podcast dedicated to leading a simpler life in the modern world”

I'm Dan Hayes.

And I'm Vanessa Hayes.

On the last episode of the show we discussed life experiences and shared a few tips about tapping into lessons learned to make future experiences even better.

Today, we're going to dive into some simple communication tips and talk about ways that you too can become a better listener...to help simplify **your** life.

Thesis Statement

We've talked in previous podcasts about communication and how it can make your life simpler....that is if it's effective communication. Ineffective communication on the other hand, can make your life a lot more complicated and often leads to confusion, stress, resentment, anger and even some potentially dangerous situations. That's why simple, but effective communication was stressed so much in our military jobs. But as we talked about the subject, we figured **everyone** could use a little refresher on effective communication. So here goes...

Major Takeaway (Introduced)

Well, this whole topic about effective communication and being a good listener came up as a result of some work we've been doing on a project of ours. We were reviewing the Sender-Messenger-Receiver-Feedback model for communication that we discussed back in Episode 10 as well as researching how to effectively communicate. What we discovered, was that although we spend close to 50% of our time listening,
there are A LOT of barriers to effective communication.

And part of the reason we have so many barriers to effective communication is because of a lack of understanding of :

- WHAT listening actually is...

- WHY it's so important, and...
 - HOW to become a better listener
- ...all to make communication more simple.

Background:

So, let's start with a little background. Have you ever tried to replay an important conversation in your head or share it with someone else (like your boss) only to fumble through it because you couldn't remember the details or what was said? Or have you said "uh-huh" "yeah", "sure" after someone asked you to do something but you actually didn't hear a word they said because you were thumbing through your Facebook feed? Or what about this...have you had your significant other raise an eyebrow with that "are you kidding me...this is the 10th time I told you that" look? I'm sure you can relate.

Ok, now...what about if *you* are the one that wants to be heard? Have you ever felt like no one is really...*I mean really*...listening to you? It seems to me like people are so self-absorbed and busy with themselves...*or*... too distracted by all the buzz going on around them or in their head that they've forgotten to be present and how to listen to others. Heck..I know I've felt that before, even with very close family and friends (of course not with Dan....my auditory listener...who I sometimes wish

wouldn't hear everything I said...wink). Again, I'm sure you can relate. Yeah, you'd think we'd be excellent listeners considering we spend close to 50% of our time listening....hmmmm.

OK, so let's break it down, so...

WHAT is Listening? It's different from hearing:

- **Hearing** is simply the receiving of sound.
- **Listening** on the other hand is an active process of receiving and constructing meaning from spoken and nonverbal messages.
- That said, listening involves some sort of attention...and there are two types:
 - **Automatic attention**: which is instinctive attention...such as responding to a stimuli like a sudden sound or movement.
 - Then there's **Selective attention**: where you are focused on something because it's important or interesting to you.
- And this is where it gets difficult, because often times the two of these compete and conflict with one

another. For example: when you are engaged in a great conversation or lecture but your attention gets diverted to the sound of the “ding” on a phone.

- So that's a basic understanding of what listening is...but why is it so important?

WHY being a good listener is important:

- It's how we cooperate and get things done...as a species.
- It's how we build a better understanding of problems that we face as individuals or members of a team or as a family.
- But the trick is being a better listener...a good one because then you can:
 - Be more productive...not wasting time figuring things out or having to re-explain things
 - Have better interpersonal relationships...by showing genuine concern for those who are trying to communicate with you
 - Gain knowledge which in turn can help you influence, persuade or negotiate with others on things that you are passionate about or believe to be really important matters.
 - Prevent stress, anxiety, resentment and potentially dangerous situations like we talked about a moment ago.

- So I think there are some great reasons to be an effective and good listener...and I imagine most of us intuitively know that. But in order for that to happen we need to recognize barriers to being a good listener.

So, here's where we get to the meat and potatoes of today's conversation. As we were doing our research, we came across a lot of great articles about barriers to communication and how to become an effective listener. But there was one article that really stood out.

It was an article written on Poynter.org by Jill Geisler, who is a Senior Faculty member of Leadership and Management at the Poynter Institute. The article is titled "10 Lousy Listeners And What We Can Learn From Them." She basically describes 10 types of lousy listeners...all of whom we could totally relate to. I mean...as we were reading the descriptions we could totally picture people in our lives (even ourselves) who fit the descriptions perfectly.

OK, so HOW can you become a better listener? What we thought we'd do today is review this article, describing the 10 types of lousy listeners and the ways that each of them

can become better listeners. We can almost guarantee that as we discuss them, like us, you'll end up recognizing people in your life that fit these descriptions!

1. The Multi-Tasker – Sure I'm listening. While I type. While I scan my computer screen. While I take just this one call. While I open this letter and page through these message slips. Now what were you saying?
1. Divorce yourself from distractions. Get out from behind your desk. Let that phone ring. (Do you know how important people feel when they see you ignore a phone to stay focused on them?) If you are too busy to give someone your full attention, say so. It is better to reschedule a conversation than to insult someone by multi-tasking throughout it. If you are expecting an important message, explain that before beginning the talk. Apologize if you know a truly unavoidable interruption is likely.
2. The Party Animal – Do I have a minute? Sure. Come on in and tell me what's on your mind. I know you've been trying to get in to see me. Go ahead, shoot. Hey, someone else is at the door. Come on in. We're just chatting. Always room for one more!

2. Think before automatically inviting others into a conversation. The author said she learned this the hard way from a fellow manager in her newsroom who, fed up, finally asked her why everyone in the organization was more important to her than he was. What she thought was “the two of us managers giving attention to staff” wasn’t that at all to him. She realized she was forever truncating his time with me, letting anyone in while he was in her office. She realized she was wrong, apologized, and they set up a signal system that made it clear when he needed undivided attention.

3. The Sentence Finisher — Stop right there, I know exactly where you are going. No need for you to finish that thought, I will. Am I smart, or what? Don’t you appreciate a boss who is this efficient and supportive? Go ahead, tell me – I’ll finish that sentence for you, too.

3. Curb your enthusiasm. I have found that most interrupters finish sentences because they are extroverts who love to think out loud. Extroverts get engaged and excited by the things they are hearing, and jump right in to make a connection. Problem is, they’re not always correct in their assumptions, but they are always interrupting. Force yourself to listen longer, like some of

the best of your introverted colleagues. (Trust me, having studied Myers-Briggs personality types, I learned why so many introverts get great credit from their colleagues for being good listeners, and why so many extroverts have to work at it.)

4. The Debater – Whatever you’re saying, I’ll challenge. I’m only playing devil’s advocate, of course. I might be doing this to help you. But then again, I might not. How do you know? I do this to everyone, all the time. Keeps people on their toes.

4. Debate with care. Recognize that as a manager, your words carry great weight. Challenge carefully, using non-loaded questions. By that I mean, ask the kind of questions that aren’t insulting, or framed in ways that put the other person in a no-win situation. It takes talent to ask the kind of questions that make people think, and reach their own conclusions. Argumentative managers can simply come off as bullies.

5. The Ann Landers – Say no more. Here’s my advice. Take it. You may not have asked for my advice. You might just have wanted me to listen to you and let you vent. You might have wanted to figure things out yourself. But how can I prove I’m a leader if I don’t jump in with a ready

answer? You're welcome.

5. Before advising, ask. Some staffers really do want your advice. But some just want to vent. Some want to think through a problem with you. Listen to their concerns. Ask questions that let them suggest solutions of their own. After that, if you have what you think is good advice, ask the person if he or she would like it. Make certain your advice doesn't come off as an order.

6. The Great Philosopher – Now, let me tell you what you really mean, but on a much broader, deeper, and meaningful level because it comes from me. I knew all this, by the way, without ever having asked you any follow-up questions about your thoughts or feelings. Why would that be important?

6. Stay grounded. Know when the conversation is better focused on the concrete or the abstract. You may have some theory to share, but know your audience well enough to know if this is the right time, place, and person for waxing philosophical. The more questions you ask, the more you'll know about the other person's needs.

7. The Autobiographer — Ah, the story you just started brings something very important to mind: me. I've been

there. I've done that. I will now tell you all about my experience, since it will be so valuable to you.

7. Remember, it's not about you. The person who wants to talk with you needs to remain the focus of the conversation. I'm not saying leaders should never illustrate their conversations with personal stories. Sometimes, especially when you reveal a great mistake, your personal anecdote can put someone else at ease. Just make certain you don't make yourself the lead of every story. Keep things in perspective.

8. The Clock Watcher – I'm very good at face-to-face meetings. I look at your face, then the face of my watch, your face, watch face ... I also fidget extremely effectively.

8. Put a clock in your line of sight. No kidding. Arrange your office so you can see the time without difficulty. This keeps you from insulting a speaker with your overt watch-glancing. If you are pressed for time, tell that to a person. When someone asks, "Got a minute?" there is no harm in saying, "I have only a minute right now. If you need more, let's set up a good time." And then keep the commitment.

9. The Speeder – You want to talk? I'm really busy so can

we make it fast? I'm on my way to a meeting. Walk along with me. Can you just send me an e-mail?

9. Speed kills. If you have to have a quick conversation, make certain the other person is satisfied by it. If not, commit to a continuance. Be careful about asking people to "C'mon, walk along with me." One manager who often did so told me about a surprise response from a co-worker: "I'm not your dog." Make sure you are friendly and genuine, even when rushed.

10. The Dropper – Thanks for sharing your thoughts with me. I will keep them in mind. Unfortunately, I will forget to follow up with you promptly, or perhaps ever, leaving you wondering if you have dropped off my radar.

10. Follow up. No matter how good a listener you are, you lose credibility if you fail to follow up on an issue raised in a conversation. It may be one of a long, long list of things you have to handle, but it is likely at the top of the other person's agenda. Telling people when you will get back to them is a commitment worth making — and keeping.

Major Takeaway (Reinforced)

So there you have it...10 great examples from Jill Geisler of listener types that have irritated us all, and some tips

on how to avoid becoming one of them!

Conclusion: So, in that Sender-Message-Receiver-Feedback model we talked about, remember that 50% of the responsibility for effective communication falls on the Listener. If that happens to be you, try to avoid the 10 listener types we talked about today. We think you'll find that being a good listener will not only make your communication more effective, it'll also make your life...simpler!

Question for the Listeners/Readers: So, how many of these listener types do you know? Better yet, which one of these lousy listeners can you relate to? And what do you think you need to do to start working on to become a better listener? We'd love to hear what works for you...you can share your thoughts with us at SimpleLifeTogether.com/044

THING Segment

Dan's Thing: My Thing this week is actually what has

started to become a Sunday routine for us, making some

- Jerky- My go to snack during the week
- Sausage- Awesome!
- Dried fruit- Love the apples, oranges.
 - Using canned slices made it simpler

Vanessa's "THING": Simplifying Sunshine's Birthday

- Google Form/Spreadsheet (made using Dan's Tutorial)
- Experiences versus Stuff (no gifts from attendees)
- Just thrilled to have a few friends over
- Making decorations

CONTACT INFO: Remember...if you have questions or comments you can always reach us at

Dan@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @DanielHayes on Twitter, or Vanessa@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @GetSimplifized on Twitter and there are links to our Google Plus profiles on the website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Podcast Awards: And remember it would really awesome of you if you could take 2 minutes to go to PodcastAwards.com and nominate Simple Life Together, for the 2013 Podcast Awrds. Just go to podcastawards.com and nominate Simple Life Together for the People's Choice Award and in the Education Category. There are two block to fill out, in Podcast Name just type "Simple Life Together" and in the Podcast URL block just type SimpleLifeTogether.com.

There's an orange pop out banner on our website, too, at SimpleLifeTogether.com, that will take you to PodcastAwards.com, as well. While you're there you can vote for other shows in other categories, too. It a great way to show your appreciation for podcasters who provide you with great, free content. I know we'll be voting for lots of shows we enjoy like Mommy's Cocktail Hour, Who-Dey Weekly, MusicRadioCreative, and lots more. So, here's your chance to show us podcasters some love!

Feedback:

Website Comments:

LeeAnn Taylor from sagegardencoaching.org commented on Episode 43: Are You Making the Most of Life's Experiences & Lessons Learned?

LeeAnn wrote: I loved this episode! I have enjoyed lots of them, but this one was so much fun to listen to. I come from a military family, so I enjoy hearing about your military pursuits and can relate!

In 2013, my husband and I are doing the Radical challenge (David Platt) so we have been eliminating items from our home all year. What a great fit when I found your podcast a month or so ago!

Also, I am an Evernote fan too and have really benefited from the tutorial episodes...now I need to go put the tips into practice. :)

Thanks for the hard work and love you put into each episode. It shows and I love having your podcast to listen to on the way back and forth to work. Found you guys

initially through Beyond the To Do list. And now you're definitely getting my vote for the podcast awards. Thanks for the value you provide to your listeners. I for sure appreciate it.

Júlia B. commented on Episode 41: Are You Losing Focus? Even Ben Franklin Had a To Do List!

Júlia wrote: This is an amazing, comprehensive resource about distractions and fighting them: Julia linked to Leo Babauta's Focus Manifesto which he offers as a free download at focusmanifesto.com.. We'll have a link to that in the shownotes.

Julia also linked to the pomodorotechnique.com. which shows how to use a kitchen timer for timing your tasks to keep you on focus. There's a great 2 minute video at the link Julia sent.

Julia says, "Hope you can use them." Thanks Julia, we will!

Wrap Up:

OK, so that's it for Episode 44 of Simple Life Together. So

today, we talked about how actively listening can help simplify your communication and your life. We shared a few personal examples of own struggles to communicate well shared a few tips to help you out, too!

My Thing was making some healthy foods and snacks during our new Sunday routine, and Vanessa's thing was

.....

As usual, you can find all the links and info from today's show at SimpleLifeTogether.com/044.

And if you'd really like to help us out, please go to podcastawards.com and nominate Simple Life Together for the People's Choice Award and in the Education Category.

So let us know what you think of the show and how you're simplifying your life, too! We'd love to hear from you.

So, until next time, we hope you enjoy your...

SIMPLE LIFE TOGETHER

Resources and Links:

Poynter.org Article: [Ten Lousy Listeners and What We Can Learn From Them](#)

[PodcastAwards.com](#)

<iframe width="960" height="720" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/1fuDDqU6n4o" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>