

Listen Twice as Much as You Speak

My mom is a very wise woman. As a kid, I loved to talk (still do). In school, I always did well academically but my report cards never failed to note my passion for vigorously exercising my vocal chords on a near-constant basis. One day Mom sat me down and said: “Robin, you were given two ears and one mouth for a reason: to listen twice as much as you speak.” Brilliant point (still working on it though).

Listening intently to someone is one of the best ways I know of to honor that person and forge a deep human connection. When you listen to someone – not just with your mind but with every fiber of your being – it sends them a message: “I value what you have to say, and I’m humble enough to listen to your words.” So few of us are really good at listening. I’ll sit down next to someone on an airplane, at the start of a six-hour flight, and they’ll still be talking by the time we land – without having even asked me my name or where I’m from or what I do or the books I’ve read. Tells me not only that they lack what scientists call “sensory acuity” (an ability to pay attention to the cues around them) but that they were probably not given much listening as kids. Most people’s idea of listening is waiting until the other person has finished speaking before answering. And the sad fact is that while one person is talking, most of us are rehearsing our replies.

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New York attorney general Eliot Spitzer has a line that I love: “Never talk when you can nod.” Your effectiveness as a businessperson, as a family member and as a human being will absolutely soar if you get this one right. Listen twice as much as you speak. Become a world-class listener. Get wildly interested in what others have to say to you. And just watch how people respond. They’ll fall in love with you. Quickly.

**“ The Greatness Guide ” by ROBIN SHARMA,
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