

# Want to Be a Better Listener? Head to the Movies!

In my experience, most everyone, if asked, wishes they were a better listener.

I put myself in the same camp. I do know that I am much better at it in some situations than in others. When I make a conscious decision, I know what to do to achieve that greater listening prowess in the moment, so I go to the movies.

When I go to the movies, I am completely wrapped up with what is happening on the screen. I am often transported to the place, situation and sensations that I am experiencing on the screen. This is true even though none of what I am experiencing is real — it is all flickering light and sound. It becomes real, engaging and enthralling because of the choices I make.

Aren't those the words we would use when describing when we are really listening?

Real, engaged, enthralled.

So, if you want that when listening to someone else, get into their movie.

As someone is talking and sharing their message, there is a story behind it, a purpose behind it and, in general, is much more than simply the words they are saying. And since we all know that there is more to listening than being able to parrot back someone's words like a digital recorder, it begins to make sense to become a movie viewer. Here is what I mean:

## **Get More Interested**

If the movie is any good at all, you are interested in it. And because of your initial interest (and the fact that you paid \$10 for the ticket and that much more for the snacks) you pay attention. Unless a really good friend or family member convinced you, you went in interested, and you were more engaged in the action. If you want to listen better, decide going in to be interested, and then get active. You may not have paid for a ticket for the conversation in your office, but it is using your time — your most precious asset of all.

## **Look Through New Eyes**

When we watch a movie, we begin to see things in new ways. We observe the world through the eyes of our favorite character. We begin to make sense of the world from their perspective. Read the last two sentences again, thinking about listening in your life. If you don't see the parallel, I don't know how I can help you.

## **Think Like Sherlock**

And no, it doesn't have to be a mystery or a whodunit for this advice to apply. We watch movies trying to figure out the clues to the plot, the snippets that help make the story make sense. When we approach listening to our colleagues, friends and family with the same level of attention to detail and curiosity, we will learn more and we

will truly be listening.

## **Enjoy It**

So I have been to a few movies I wouldn't need to see again, but very few that I didn't enjoy at least a little bit. When we go to the movie of the person we are listening to and we begin to enjoy it, we will listen better and learn more. And we'll get a bigger benefit than from any movie — we will build a relationship and trust while we enjoy the show!