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**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

**The Gift of Listening**

**By Lynn Cutts**

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Give something different this Valentine's Day instead of chocolate or flowers. (Save the chocolate for me.) Give something precious and unique, something that only you can give. Something suitable for all ages and all relationships. Give the gift of listening. Really listening.

How often do we sit down and listen to our loved ones? The vast majority of our conversations with others occur while we are doing something else. We're driving, or cooking dinner or tidying up. We're watching TV or listening to both kids and the dog. We're preoccupied with our own thoughts. Or we just tune the conversation completely out. Our mental processes go like this:

Hmm, I like that song on the radio. I wonder who does it? I wish he'd get rid of that shirt. It's a bad color for him. Oh, dang, I just broke a nail. I wonder what I should fix for dinner? Is he still talking about the car? Yup. Why doesn't he just get it fixed? I don't get what's the big deal here.

Of course, sometimes we do sit down and pay attention, or so we think. While we are focused on the conversation, it's usually with the goal of coming up with the next clever thing to say, or a killer argument to the point being made.

What does it mean to really listen? It means paying attention to what the other person is saying, without being distracted by outside events, our thoughts, or planning what to say next. It brings improved connection, communication and understanding to any relationship. It tells the other person that they matter; that you care enough about them to make them a priority, a focus. It lets them know that they are more important to you than washing dishes or fixing supper. Now that's a real gift.

Like everything else in life, listening is a skill. It takes practice. Here are a few guidelines that might help:

1. Find a quiet place where the two of you can sit down together, with no distractions. It doesn't have to be at home. My husband and I often go down to a pub and grab a quiet table in the back when we want to just sit and talk.

## The Gift of Listening

2. Get really curious about what the other person is saying. Ask open-ended questions, such as "What else?" "Tell me more about that." "How does this matter to you?" Be careful not to ask questions that sound judgmental, though, such as "Why on earth would you do that?" or "What were you thinking?".
3. Set up a ground rule that nobody gets to be wrong. Don't judge the other person. Just accept for now.
4. By the same token, don't try to fix things, or solve problems, unless you're asked to. Often all someone needs is a place to talk things out so they can discover their own solutions. Give the other person the respect of believing that they are resourceful and able to resolve things on their own.
5. Don't interrupt. Wait until the other person is finished talking before you jump in. Let there be natural gaps in the conversation. You don't need to fill every second with talk.
6. Maintain eye contact, but don't stare.
7. Be encouraging. Let the other person know you're really listening. Repeat key words, say "uh-huh", nod in agreement.
8. Acknowledge the other person's feelings and point of view. Try phrases such as "What I'm hearing is . . ." or "I'm getting that . . ." This also helps to eliminate misunderstandings.
9. Finally, pay attention to body language and energy. Sit with an open, receptive posture. Angle your body slightly towards the other person, or lean in a bit. Do not cross your arms across your chest defensively. In addition, notice how the other person is sitting. Be aware of the cadence of their words and the energy behind them.

Following those nine guidelines will drastically improve your listening skills. Which will drastically improve communication. Which will drastically improve your relationships. And that's a Valentine's gift that will keep on giving – both to the other person and to you.

NOTE: You are welcome to use this article online in electronic newsletters and e-zines as long as it remains complete and unaltered (including the "about the author" info). If use of this article is desired in print, you must first contact Lynn Cutts at [Lynn@ManageYourMuse.com](mailto:Lynn@ManageYourMuse.com).

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Happy Holidays!

Simon Lim, about



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