

Alicia Sample
Listening effectiveness
self feedback report
Monday, January 20, 2003

Introduction

The following information is provided to help you to navigate the extensive information that is included in this Listening effectiveness output report.

1. Overall summary chart

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in seven categories that make up the Listening effectiveness profile. Scores upon which to most concentrate are above 3.5, which are considered to be strong and scores below 2.75, which may be in need of further development. Please note that these category scores are averages. Individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the category label hyperlink.

2. Category description pages

This report contains three output pages for each of the seven categories. The first of these three pages explains the category, list average scores and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second page provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third page in the set provides broadly based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies in the overall category.

3. 10/10 Report

The 10/10 Report page provides the raw scores for the top 10 highest scoring questions and the bottom 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies the categories to which these questions belong.

4. Course and Reading suggestions

This output report includes development suggestions for the two lowest scoring categories out of the seven. These suggestions include training courses that may prove helpful, as well as specific books that may provide some useful additional information.

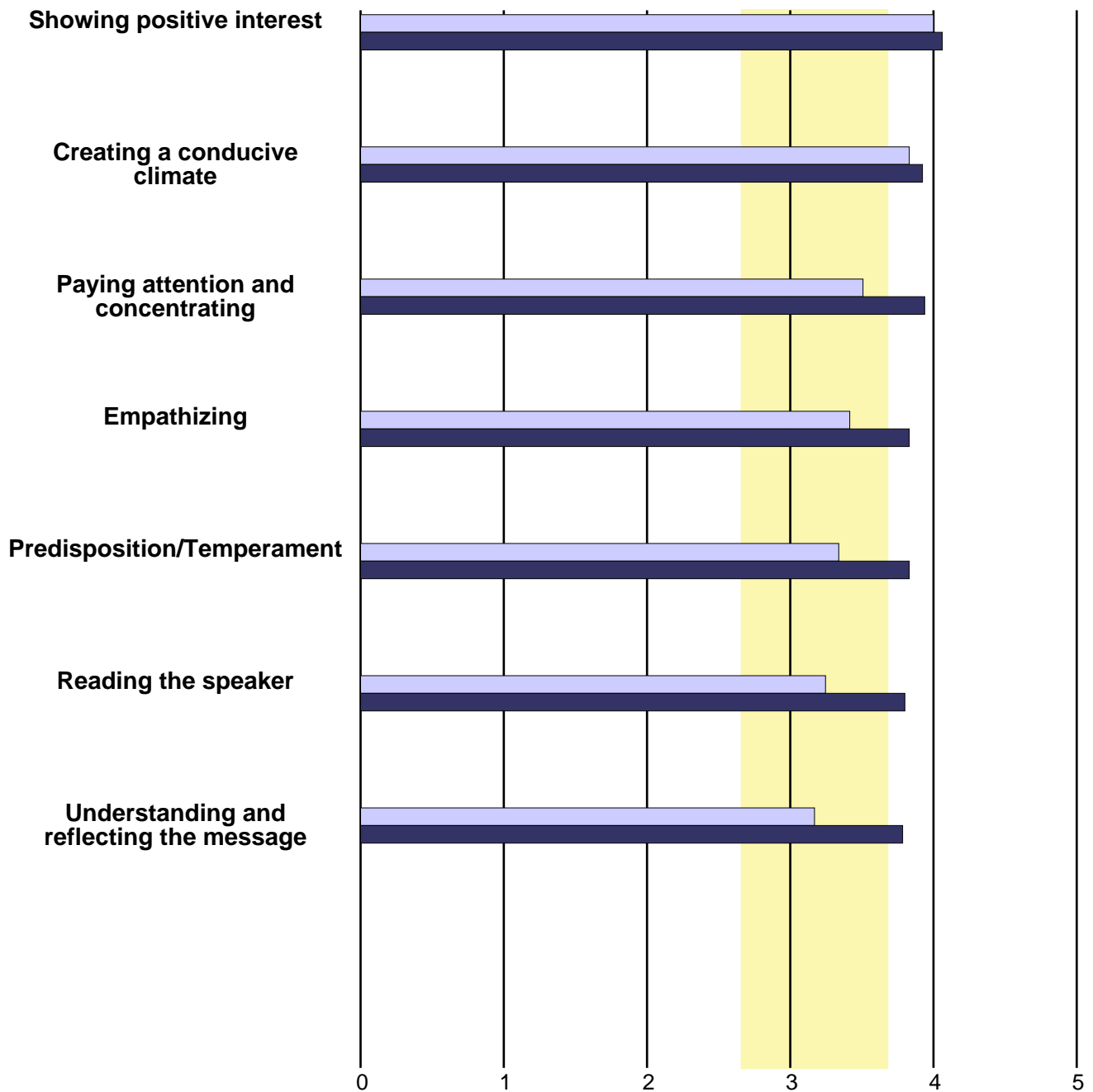
5. Development Plan

The development plan takes the five lowest scoring questions on aggregate and puts them into a single page template for individuals to record the specific actions that they plan to take as a result of their feedback during the forthcoming twelve month period. Individuals may draw upon any of the general guidance offered in their feedback report, or perhaps more usefully, draw upon the coaching tips ideas that are also included (see next section)

6. Coaching tips

The overall output report includes detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions on aggregate (consistent with the one page development plan). These coaching tips provide not only elaborative information about the particular questions but provide some specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills or learn new behaviors in the future.

OVERALL SUMMARY



Self
 Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

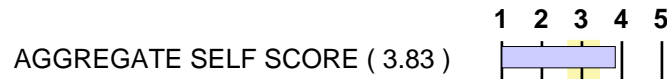
Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening effectiveness Profile

CREATING A CONDUCTIVE CLIMATE

Creating a conducive climate looks at the effort that the listener expends in ensuring that the communication atmosphere or environment is as appropriate as possible. This category asks the question "Has the listener done everything they can to minimize distractions and create a climate for open conversation?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual may find themselves talking or trying to listen in an environment that will quickly interfere with their capacity to concentrate, or give their full focus and attention.

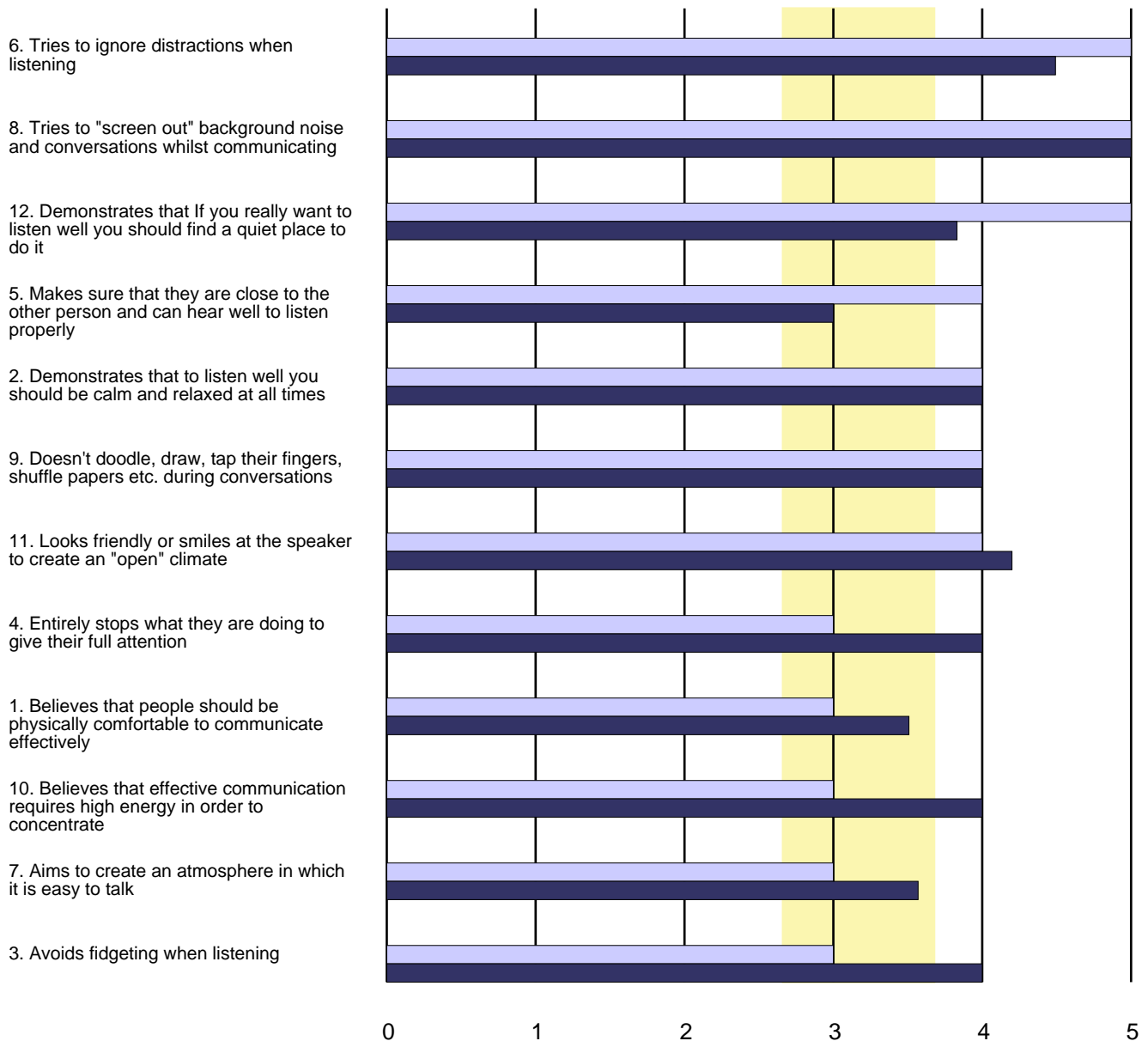
A low score person will be likely to let the communication environment readily interfere with their attempts to listen. Some communications may therefore occur 'on-the-run', or be kept to messages, which are either short or shallow."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual is highly conscious of the need to find a quiet and calm communication environment, or one in which noise and distractions can be eliminated or at least managed so as not to be too intrusive.

A high score person will be likely to avoid trying to communicate anything more than idle 'chit-chat' in an un-conducive environment, preferring to find a place that is quiet and where the parties are comfortable. Even if some distractions continue to occur, the high scorer will seek to filter these out or manage them so as not to interfere too much at all."

Listening effectiveness Profile CREATING A CONDUCTIVE CLIMATE



Self Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening effectiveness Profile CREATING A CONDUCTIVE CLIMATE

Creating a conducive climate looks at the effort that the listener expends in ensuring that the communication atmosphere or environment is as appropriate as possible. This category asks the question "Has the listener done everything they can to minimize distractions and create a climate for open conversation?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to formally ask themselves whether the listening climate is appropriate, if the communication subject or time needed requires that it is. Once this assessment has occurred, the low scorer needs to look for a calm place to talk, room comfort, where possible, and try to minimize any physical distractions, including personal fidgeting. Low scorers should look to work on their '1' scores first, then the '2' scores and so on. This approach of concentrating on low scores first, should be used in every category.

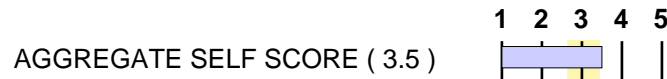
Creating a conducive climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Before the communication starts, mentally ask yourself the following base questions:- -Is this communication environment comfortable for me and the other person to talk;- -Can we hear properly without unnecessary straining?- -Are external distractions going to interfere or intrude into the conversation?- -Can I work hard to personally avoid interrupting the other party's in delivering their message in their own words?
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Listening effectiveness Profile

PAYING ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATING

Paying attention and concentrating looks at how effective a listener may be at maintaining their focus on what is being communicated; both verbally and non-verbally. This category asks the question "How well does the listener look for the core message and reflect their understanding accurately to the speaker?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual takes what is said at 'face value' and finds that they can easily 'drift away' or let their mind wander and thereby miss important points in the discussion.

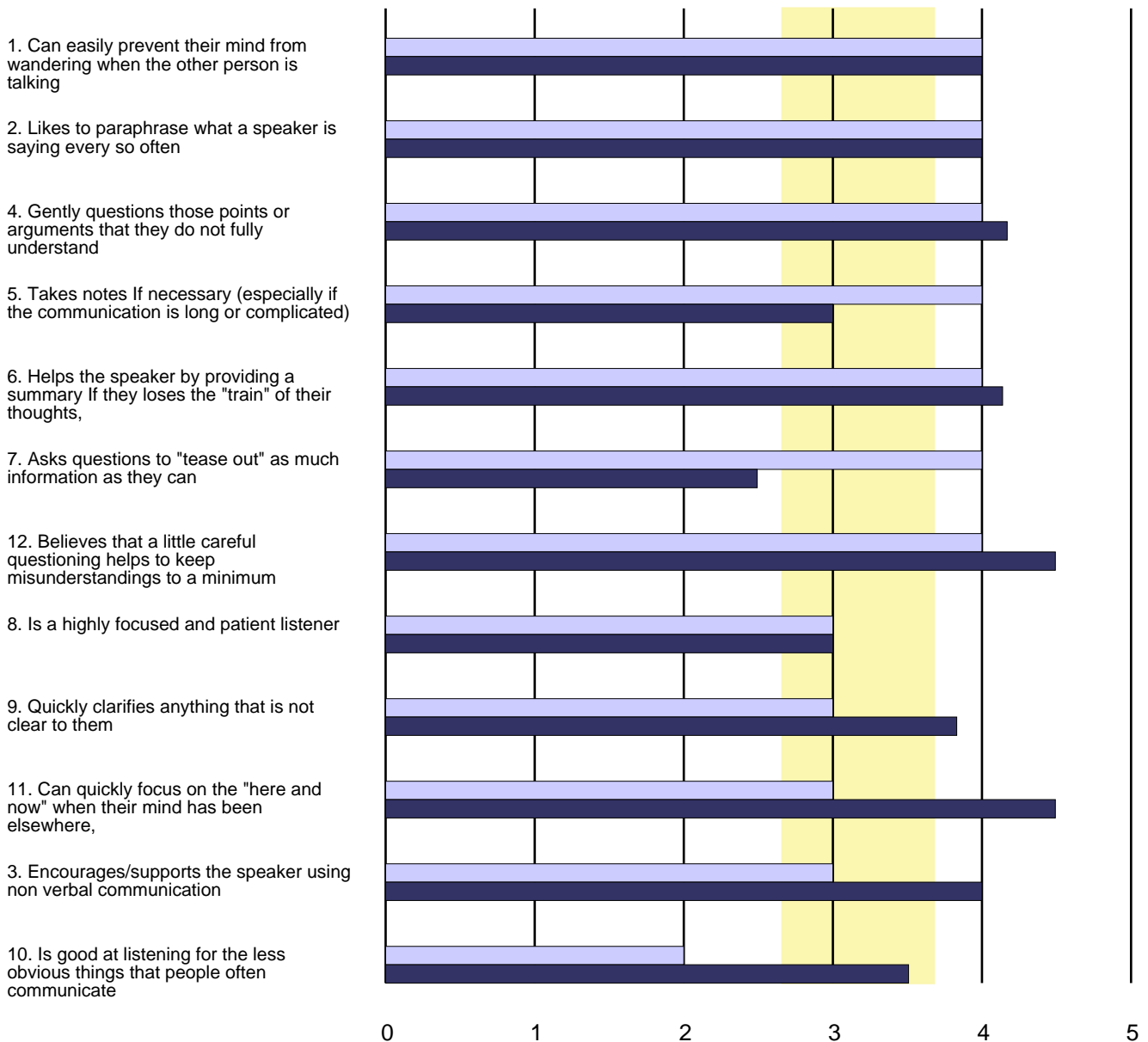
A low score person will be likely to pay as much attention to their own thoughts and reflections as they do to the person with whom they are communicating. They may also make little use of questions of clarification (having neither the time nor the inclination) and can therefore become confused or misunderstand the message."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual understands the need to both ask questions, where it helps to create clarity, as well as paraphrasing what is being said to ensure that the discussion remains focussed and on track.

A high score person will be likely to expend significant energy and effort in concentrating constantly on what the other person is saying. This will usually entail asking as many questions as necessary to avoid lack of clarity, confusion and misunderstanding."

Listening effectiveness Profile PAYING ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATING



Self
 Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening effectiveness Profile

PAYING ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATING

Paying attention and concentrating looks at how effective a listener may be at maintaining their focus on what is being communicated; both verbally and non-verbally. This category asks the question "How well does the listener look for the core message and reflect their understanding accurately to the speaker?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to carefully think about how they can ask a range of questions in various conversations that can help them to concentrate and pay close attention to what is being said. These questions need to be asked in practice as often as possible, taking care to listen for the answers they elicit before responding.

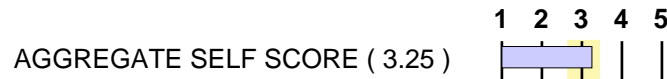
Paying attention and concentrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Concentrate as much as possible on not thinking about your next response whilst the other person is talking.-If necessary, take notes on what you hear and use "affirming" body language to show the speaker that you are focussed on what they are saying.-Be as patient as you can when people are speaking (and especially if they need time to explain something that is not easy to convey).-Avoid mentally 'drifting off' into your own mental world and thereby run the risk of missing important points.
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Listening effectiveness Profile

READING THE SPEAKER

Reading the speaker looks at the extent to which the listener accurately evaluates and understands the full or even real communication message being sent by the other party. This category asks the question "What is the speaker trying to say beyond their basic words alone?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

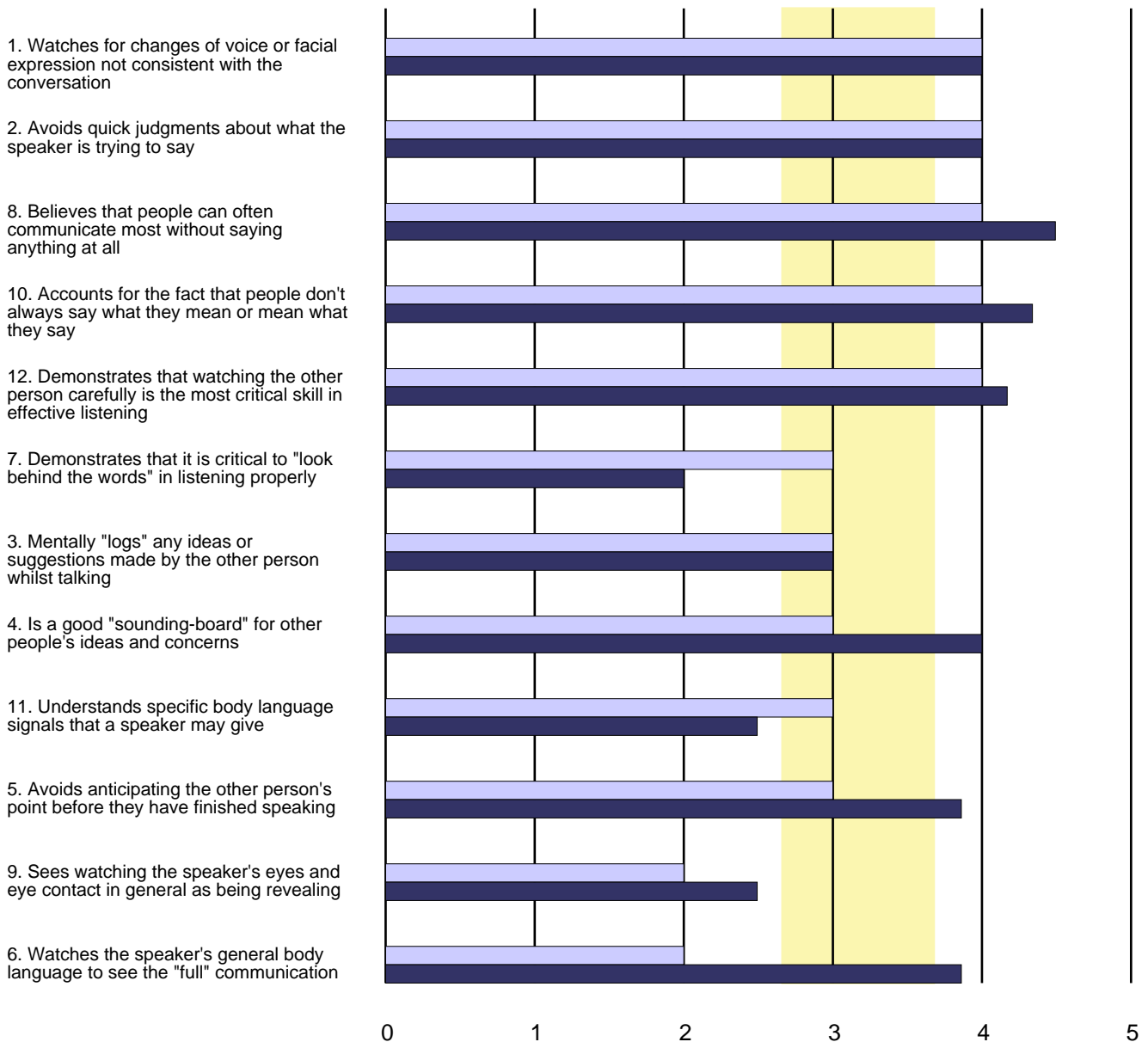
LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual will spend little or no time looking 'beyond the words' in order to determine what the other party might be saying. Their mind is often actively 'cluttered' with other thoughts and they may privately believe that all this 'between the lines' and 'body language stuff' is over-rated anyway. A low score person will be likely to miss many of the indirect communications given by another party, and therefore fail to understand people's statements, actions or feelings on occasions. This may lead to less effort being expended in trying to listen, making the capacity to read the overall message even less effective."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual stops themselves anticipating what the other person means until they have 'read between the lines' and behind the message. They are also likely to believe that watching is the key to effective listening and therefore makes sure that this is a well-practiced skill. A high score person will be likely to be able to almost 'sense' the deeper meanings or more hidden messages in all but the most simple or shallow communications. This often gives them useful insight into people's statements and motives for future action."

Listening effectiveness Profile READING THE SPEAKER



Self
 Norm

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Listening effectiveness Profile

READING THE SPEAKER

Reading the speaker looks at the extent to which the listener accurately evaluates and understands the full or even real communication message being sent by the other party. This category asks the question "What is the speaker trying to say beyond their basic words alone?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to recognize that words are only a small part of the overall communication mix and that they hinder their understanding if they don't work harder at the more underlying elements. Reading books on body language and communication theory may help a little but quiet watching of the other person and their emotions is the most beneficial approach; with practice, even the lowest scorers can learn to read others in time.

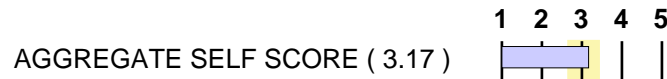
Reading the speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Watch for small or subtle changes in the mood of the speaker or the way in which things are said (in words or actions).-Watch the other person's eyes carefully and any other body language which may convey meaning.-Listen for longer than may be comfortable for you to get the full or complete picture.-Read between the lines of what people are saying in their words directly.-Try to avoid guessing what the other person may be going to say next but focus on the general direction and flow of the conversation
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Listening effectiveness Profile

UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING THE MESSAGE

Understanding and reflecting the message looks at the listener's effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and letting them know that they have understood the message. This category asks the question "How well does the listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual probably rushes conversations and uses the opportunity to summarize or sum up infrequently (if at all).

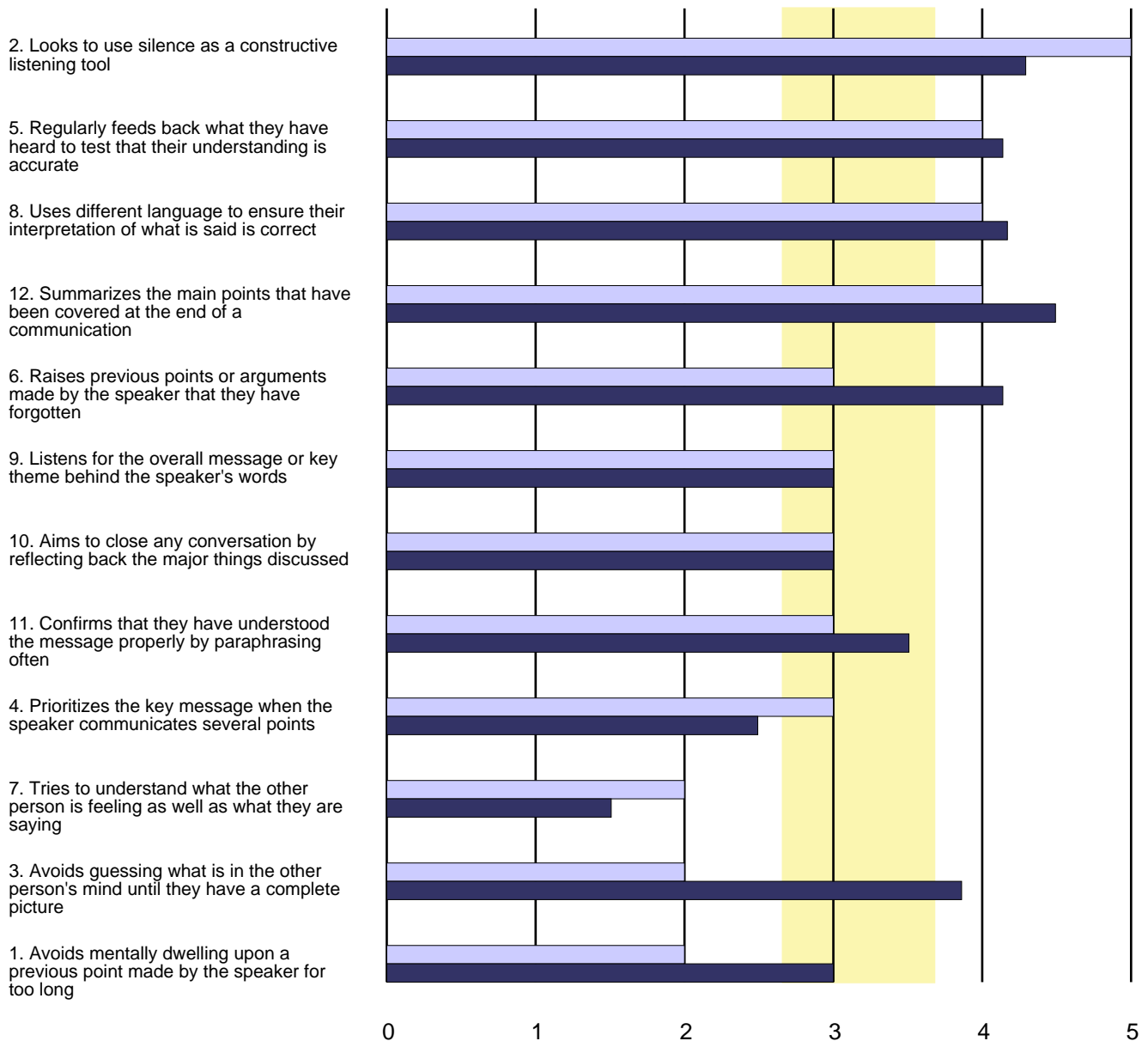
A low score person will be likely to selectively listen or only pay attention to parts of the conversation and therefore have insufficient information to summarize well. The 'quality' of conversations may consequently suffer and both parties may not be entirely clear whether they have reached a common understanding at the end. "

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual works hard at interpreting and evaluating what a speaker is really trying to say and repeat it back to them in summary form so that a mutual understanding can be reached.

A high score person will be likely to avoid lengthy passages of conversation without providing a quick summary, or reflecting back the message before moving on. Communications are often therefore more effective and focussed."

Listening effectiveness Profile UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING THE MESSAGE



Self Norm

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Listening effectiveness Profile

UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING THE MESSAGE

Understanding and reflecting the message looks at the listener's effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and letting them know that they have understood the message. This category asks the question "How well does the listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to 'tune-in' as much as they are able, and be in a position to provide a short mental summary of what is being said (without guessing or making assumptions). Think of the speaker as always having at least one key message. The challenge is to discover it and to confirm directly that this interpretation is accurate.

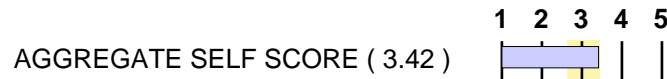
Understanding and reflecting the message	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Try to slow down your thinking during conversations and concentrate on the whole message from the speaker,-Include both the words and the emotions that are transmitted.-As a direct test of your ability, look to paraphrase what you hear from time to time and directly check your understanding.-Avoid assuming that you can 'pick up the threads' of a conversation later-gently ask questions of clarification at the time.-Use different phrases to the speaker to the speaker to paraphrase what has been communicated to you to sum up your understanding.
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Listening effectiveness Profile

EMPATHIZING

Empathizing looks at how well the listener demonstrates open interest and commitment to the other person's feelings and overall message. This category asks the question "Does the speaker feel that the listener truly values them and their message, and can appreciate the context in which it is given?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual spends little or no time in trying to put themselves in the other person's shoes or takes much account of any feelings that may be present (if they can spot them at all!).

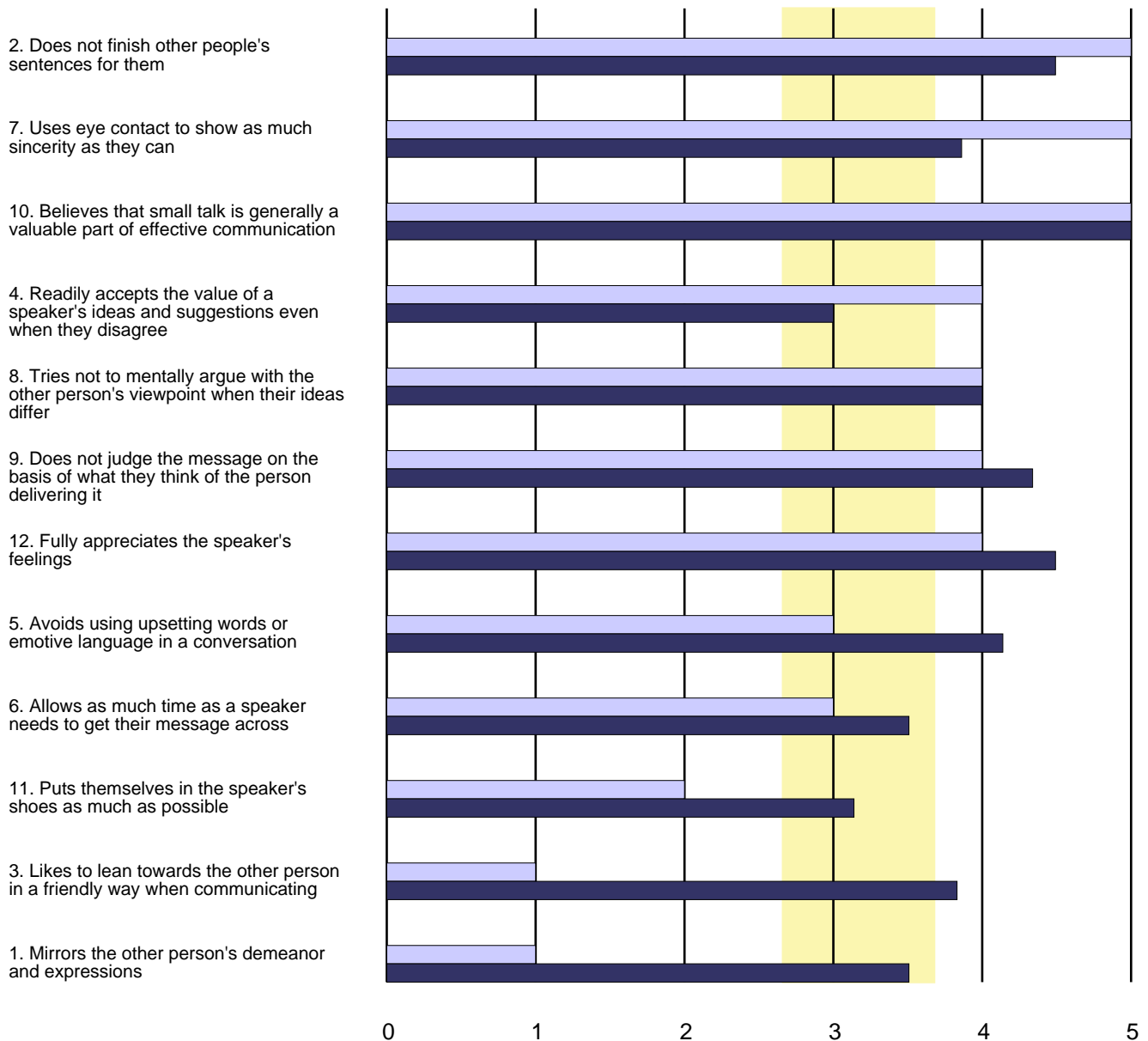
A low score person will be likely to be a 'transactional' communicator. An exchange will therefore be a simple task to be completed before moving on to the next one. low scorers are likely to listen from their own perspective and may have little concern to know much about the other person at all."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual quickly finds common ground with the other party with which they are communicating and demonstrates that they fully appreciate their feelings and their message.

A high score person will be likely to spend a considerable amount of time and effort in seeking to understand the other party's feelings and look to respond in the most positive and empathetic way possible by sharing some of their own. They are therefore likely to be extremely effective at getting the speaker to 'open-up'."

Listening effectiveness Profile EMPATHIZING



Self Norm

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Listening effectiveness Profile

EMPATHIZING

Empathizing looks at how well the listener demonstrates open interest and commitment to the other person's feelings and overall message. This category asks the question "Does the speaker feel that the listener truly values them and their message, and can appreciate the context in which it is given?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers should aim to be less direct or 'aloof' in their communication, and less 'in-charge' of the conversation than they might be used to. Time should also be taken to look for areas of commonality, rather than areas of difference; ask the question; what might I think if I was in their position?

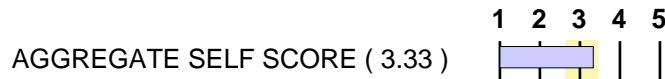
Empathizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Try to imagine yourself being in the speaker's position or appreciating the way the speaker is feeling as you listen to them.-With a little practice, start to share a few experiences and feelings of your own and help open up the conversation.-Avoid jumping in or finishing a speaker's sentences for them at all costs.-Always keep all your conversations sincere and on a calm and friendly footing.
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Listening effectiveness Profile

PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT

Predisposition looks at your base character predisposition, temperament or your internal capacity to want to listen or have the patience to do so. This category asks the question "how much am I prepared to invest my time and energy into the careful listening process?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual is often too rushed or distracted to listen properly a lot of the time, and will even see some individuals as being not worth listening to at all!

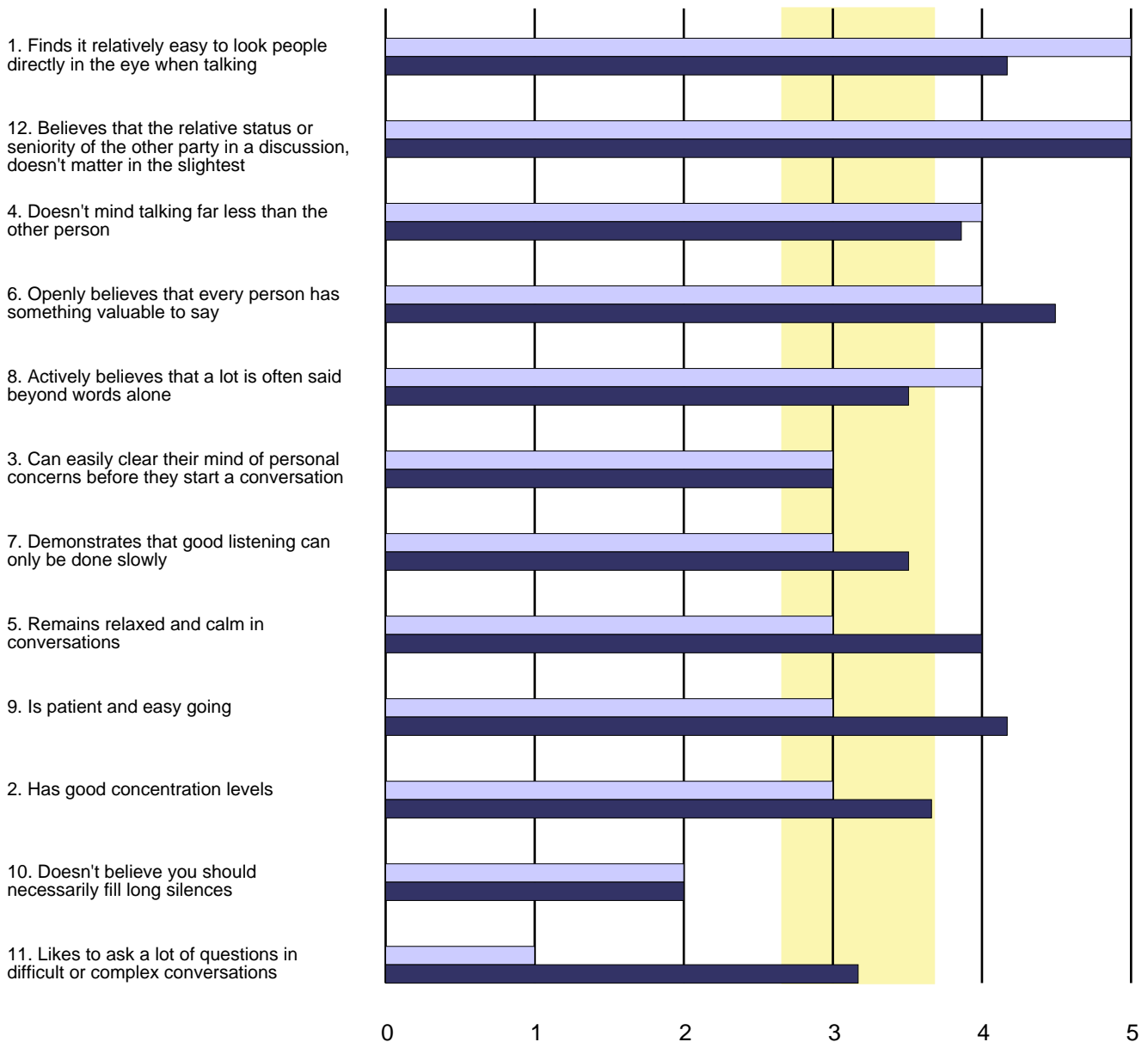
A low score person will be likely to find listening attentively extremely difficult in many circumstances, particularly when they have other things on their mind. Low scorers tend to interrupt more often, guess where the conversation is going, jump to conclusions and become distracted more easily. This means that they are likely to miss parts of the communication message and fail to receive some of the more 'subtle' points altogether."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual is naturally prepared to give everyone that talks to them the time and focus to make themselves heard and understood. This person's open, relaxed and patient manner probably means that people will enjoy sharing their views and feelings with them.

A high score person will be likely to put a speaker quickly at ease and to create a permissive environment in which they will feel safe to share their ideas and their feelings. In addition, the high score person is probably able to tease out and read the 'deeper' meanings often lying behind the words of the communicator."

Listening effectiveness Profile PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT



Self
 Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening effectiveness Profile PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT

Predisposition looks at your base character predisposition, temperament or your internal capacity to want to listen or have the patience to do so. This category asks the question "how much am I prepared to invest my time and energy into the careful listening process?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to make a conscious commitment to spending more time listening and force themselves not to jump to conclusions, form hasty opinions, interrupt and finish other people's sentences for them. Instead, they should practice being more patient, using pauses and silence more often in conversation, and successfully putting to one side distractions and the habit of letting the mind drift. Low scorers would potentially benefit greatly by trying to find a quiet environment in which they can try to give their full attention.

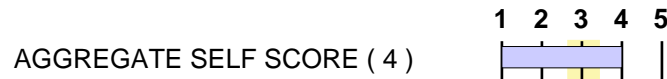
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Deliberately look to concentrate more in your discussion with other people.-Make a conscious decision to talk substantially less and listen more.-Use positive body language (stand more square in front of people, avoid fidgeting, maintain strong eye contact etc)-Demonstrate your interest in what every speaker is saying, regardless of what you think of the message, or the person.-Listen to every individual on the merits and relevance of what they communicate not you may think of them.
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Listening effectiveness Profile

SHOWING POSITIVE INTEREST

Showing positive interest looks at the amount of effort made by the listener to demonstrate how much they value the other party's message. This category asks the question "How much does the listener focus and act to make the speaker feel that their message will be effectively received?"

1 = almost never, 5 = almost always.



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

"Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ('occasionally' and 'almost never') are likely to mean that this individual may give an impression of being aloof, disinterested and even unconcerned about the speaker and their topic (which may be very important to them, if not to you!).

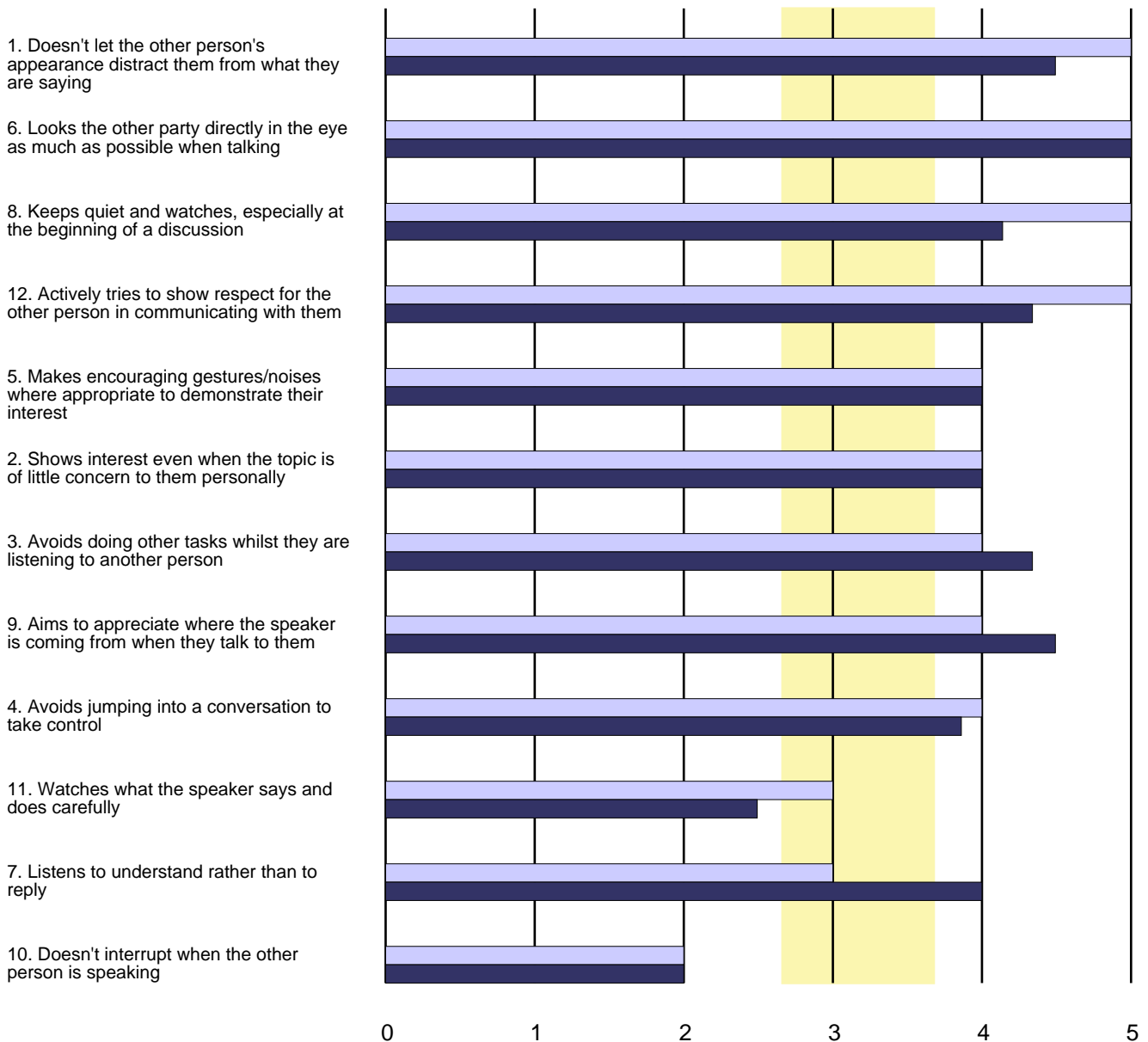
A low score person will be likely to distract or even irritate the speaker by mainly paying attention to almost everything else but listening to the direct communication. Other parties are likely to learn to keep their communications with you short and terse, or look to others who will listen more openly, or where they can feel more valued."

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

"Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ('almost always' and 'very frequently') are likely to mean that this individual openly shows their respect for both the person and what they are trying to say to them. In addition, in conversation, they are likely to use a range of positive gestures and body language and keep the discussion positive and open.

A high score person will be likely to immediately signal that they welcome the other person's communication and sustain their focus and interest in full for the duration of the conversation. They are also likely to intelligently use positive nodding and sounds to help the flow of the conversation, and make the speaker feel good about themselves and their ability to get their message across."

Listening effectiveness Profile SHOWING POSITIVE INTEREST



Self
 Norm

The above chart is sorted in descending order of summary scores.

Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average aggregate scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Listening effectiveness Profile SHOWING POSITIVE INTEREST

Showing positive interest looks at the amount of effort made by the listener to demonstrate how much they value the other party's message. This category asks the question "How much does the listener focus and act to make the speaker feel that their message will be effectively received?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers need to become much less judgmental or opinionated about who and what is worth listening to and adopt a more 'neutral mode' whilst listening in general. They can therefore try to make more eye contact, avoid interrupting, try feeding back what they have heard from time to time, and show as much respect for everyone that communicates with them as they can.

Showing positive interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Even if this is hard to do in a completely sincere way at the outset, practice nodding, encouraging the speaker, recognizing good points that are made and even smiling where appropriate.- The more you do this, the more naturally that positive interest will be shown.- Make sure that your body language is always positive or at least 'neutral' in all your conversations with people.- Ask questions regularly to show positive interest in the subject being communicated- Actively demonstrate that you respect the speaker's opinion even when you completely disagree with it.
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THE '10/10' REPORT

Top 10 development needs

		scores
Empathizing	1. Mirrors the other person's demeanor and expressions	1.0
Empathizing	3. Likes to lean towards the other person in a friendly way when communicating	1.0
Predisposition/Temperament	11. Likes to ask a lot of questions in difficult or complex conversations	1.0
Paying attention and concentrating	10. Is good at listening for the less obvious things that people often communicate	2.0
Reading the speaker	6. Watches the speaker's general body language to see the "full" communication	2.0
Reading the speaker	9. Sees watching the speaker's eyes and eye contact in general as being revealing	2.0
Understanding and reflecting the message	Avoids mentally dwelling upon a previous point made by the speaker for too long	2.0
Understanding and reflecting the message	Avoids guessing what is in the other person's mind until they have a complete picture	2.0
Understanding and reflecting the message	Tries to understand what the other person is feeling as well as what they are saying	2.0
Empathizing	11. Puts themselves in the speaker's shoes as much as possible	2.0

Top 10 strengths

Creating a conducive climate	6. Tries to ignore distractions when listening	5.0
Creating a conducive climate	8. Tries to "screen out" background noise and conversations whilst communicating	5.0
Creating a conducive climate	12. Demonstrates that If you really want to listen well you should find a quiet place to do it	5.0
Understanding and reflecting the message	Looks to use silence as a constructive listening tool	5.0
Empathizing	2. Does not finish other people's sentences for them	5.0
Empathizing	7. Uses eye contact to show as much sincerity as they can	5.0
Empathizing	10. Believes that small talk is generally a valuable part of effective communication	5.0
Predisposition/Temperament	1. Finds it relatively easy to look people directly in the eye when talking	5.0
Predisposition/Temperament	12. Believes that the relative status or seniority of the other party in a discussion, doesn't matter in the slightest	5.0
Showing positive interest	1. Doesn't let the other person's appearance distract them from what they are saying	5.0

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

Understanding and reflecting the message

Understanding and reflecting the message looks at the listener's effectiveness at interpreting what the speaker is saying and letting them know that they have understood the message. This category asks the question "How well does the listener summarize the key points and accurately paraphrase what is being communicated?"

Course Suggestions

- Interviewing skills
- Asking probing questions
- Paraphrasing and summarizing skills
- Communication skills

Reading Suggestions

- Between People : Communicating One-To-One, John A. Sanford. 1988
- Active Listening : Building Skills for Understanding (Active Listening), Marc Helgesen, et al. 1994
- The Business of Listening : A Practical Guide to Effective Listening (Fifty-Minute Series.), Diane Bone, et al. 1995
- Speakers, Listeners and Communication : Explorations in Discourse Analysis, Gillian Brown, 1997
- The Art of Winning Conversation : Proven Communication Techniques for Personal and Professional Success, Morey Stettner. 1999

Other Suggestions

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

Reading the speaker

Reading the speaker looks at the extent to which the listener accurately evaluates and understands the full or even real communication message being sent by the other party. This category asks the question "What is the speaker trying to say beyond their basic words alone?"

Course Suggestions

- Influencing others
- Communication skills
- Body language interpretation
- Feedback giving and receiving

Reading Suggestions

- Body Language, Darsie Alexander, et al. 2000)
- Body Language, Mark Asher. 2000
- Body Language, Michael Craft. 2000
- Body Language, James W. Hall. Mass Market Paperback 1999)
- Learning Styles, Jon Warner, 1998

Other Suggestions

- If you feel comfortable to do so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects to improve your skills and other possible support they may be able to offer.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

Development Area: Mirrors the other person's demeanor and expressions		1.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Likes to lean towards the other person in a friendly way when communicating		1.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Likes to ask a lot of questions in difficult or complex conversations		1.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Is good at listening for the less obvious things that people often communicate		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			
Development Area: Watches the speaker's general body language to see the "full" communication		2.0	N/A	N/A
Action to Take:	Target Date:			

5 Empathizing

I try to mirror the other person's demeanor and expressions

In order to show the other person that you understand their point of view, that you relate to their feelings and can appreciate their stance you should ideally utilize verbal and physical evidence to prove it. In paraphrasing and summarizing their message, as well as in asking questions, this will typically involve capturing the essence of their message, reflecting, albeit in your own words, the core meaning and purpose of their communication, demonstrating that you have been listening, and comprehending and appreciate their perspective. This will be an ongoing process throughout the conversation, and you should ideally mirror key aspects of the other person's body language, from smiling when they do to displaying signs of apprehension and concern when they appear nervous. You are basically striving to accept their feelings, letting them know that you want to share in the discussion unconditionally, that far from judging them you are there to listen and understand.

People who have empathy with each other often unconsciously mirror each other's behavior. This can mean gestures and postures and verbal inflections and even laughter (as well as general facial expressions). By consciously doing this, and doing it with sensitivity, it is possible to convey empathy to the person you are listening to.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Pay attention to the rich variety of micro-events that make up a person's repertoire of facial expressions. Note that the brow, the eyebrows, the eyelids, the cheek muscles, the mouth and the chin can convey so much. To sensitize yourself to just how much variety there can be within one face, stand close to a mirror, and act out different emotional and behavioral states (joy, depression, curiosity, affection, distaste, fatigue, concentration, determination, relaxation, and so on). Pay close attention to just how the different sections of your face convey these states.
- Begin to mirror the facial expressions of others. It may help to start off by simply concentrating on one part of their face and yours (for example, the brow and eyebrows, the mouth, the chin).
- Aim to put your faith in the principle that imitation is the best form of flattery, raising the speaker's confidence and willingness to open up by mirroring their more positive expressions, verbally and physically
- Develop the art of pacing, that is, reflecting back to the speaker their actions, such as tone and rate of delivery and breathing, and principal arguments and ideas
- Don't concentrate on pacing to the detriment of missing the message – it should become an unconscious means of adding to your and the other person's relationship
- Whenever a person is reluctant to describe their feelings, respond with questions which include encompass the kind of emotions they have been using themselves
- Remember that it is never sufficient to merely mimic the other person by repeating their speech verbatim – you should take their main points and extract the most appropriate words and phrases
- Pace the other person subtly and gradually – if they seem uncomfortable with your pacing then they probably suspect an element of sarcasm in your behavior



5 Empathizing

I like to lean towards the other person in a friendly way when communicating

It is important to offer your attention physically during a conversation by leaning forward, particularly when the other person is doing the talking. Such behavior indicates a personal kind of concern and removes the air of detachment, which might persist if you just sit back, arms folded for instance.

If someone is trying to communicate with you on a personal level the effective listener should ideally do all that they can to create a personable mood. However, at the same time, care should be taken not to exaggerate your display of friendliness as the other person may suspect a sense of rehearsed method in your acting. Once anyone perceives a degree of manipulation in your approach they will typically bring the conversation to a close or merely utter the message that they think will best satisfy you, with little feeling and even less conviction.

It should always be remembered that a friendly manner must be natural and well practiced enough to be true to character. While being careful to maintain a healthy distance when leaning forward you will therefore be seen as inquiring and connected. Anything you say in regard to the speaker's message will consequently be recognized as confidential and considerate.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Recognize that by leaning towards the other person slightly in a conversation, you are conveying focus and attentiveness.
- Aim to be natural, warm and friendly, recognizing that a positive manner is likely to be far more productive than an aloof and remote or condescending disposition
- Learn to treat space and personal territory as important gauges of a person's desire to communicate openly and measure how much their comfort zone changes over time in response to your approachability
- Look to convey sincere confiding behavior, which communicates the positive impression of wanting to work together and that you trust the liaison will be mutually beneficial
- Be careful not to respond to the other person's message with language that conflicts with your friendly attitude (this often comes across as manipulation).



1

Predisposition/Temperament

I like to ask a lot of questions in difficult or complex conversations

Asking questions is the best way of seeking out more information (particularly in difficult or convoluted conversations) but it can have the dual purpose of showing that you are paying attention. Whether you also absorb what the other person says or feels about the subject depends on frequency and form of questioning and the acknowledgment by the speaker that you have understood properly.

During the exploration of lengthy and complicated subjects you will have to utilize questioning (and its attendant nods and murmurs confirming understanding) with great frequency. Not only is your own concentration being tested but the speaker needs your assistance in keeping up with the train of logic and delivery. The moment you feel you are losing the thread of the argument you should ask for clarification and if dissatisfied or still unsure repeat the question (albeit in a slightly different way).

Questions need not be exclusively of the 'how', 'why', 'what', 'when' type but should sometimes be couched in the language of summarizing, particularly useful in confirming that you are keeping up with the speaker when they have been focusing simultaneously on several points or discussing a topic unfamiliar to you. It is also worthwhile exploring the speaker's feelings by directly requesting them to talk openly about their emotions on a particular point. This, and other questioning methods, will place the message in context and often serve to slow the delivery down and give you time to consider what has been said.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- If you are confused by a line of thought, or left behind by the speed of delivery, ask the speaker to illustrate his or her ideas with one or two examples
- Never feel ashamed at having to ask for a definition or explanation of words or phrases about which you are unfamiliar or the context in which they are being discussed is lost to you
- When searching for extra information on a subject include in the question specific material already covered to show that you have been paying full attention and are not seeking mere repetition
- Don't skip a point with little notion as to its meaning and significance – assumptions can only lead to deeper confusion during subsequent conversation
- Always remember that unlike reflective statements, which explore emotions, questions should be used to clarify points of fact and their inherent logic in order to consolidate and enhance understanding
- Questions which seek to confirm that you understand a complicated message could begin "is what you're saying that...?"; "if I'm not mistaken, then...? Or "so as I understand it, do you mean to say that...?"
- While questions may be challenging and thought provoking, they should never be asked in an aggressive, attacking or critical way.



6 Paying Attention and Concentrating

I am good at listening for the less obvious things that people often communicate

The listener that maintains constant vigilance you will always be open to receiving a wide variety of more subtle messages from the speaker. However, identifying and categorizing them is not an easy matter when so many are partially concealed and almost imperceptible. To avoid inaccurate interpretation you should aim to create as much comfort, relaxation and acceptance on the proceedings as possible from the outset. This is simply because it is considerably more difficult to assess the significance of the speaker's more subtle indicators of mood or feeling or anything else they may be saying between the lines when discussion are negatively impacted by unwanted external factors or stress on the part of either party in the conversation.

In order to gain substantial benefits from reading smaller signals you must test your observational skills to the full, remaining alert to the tiniest verbal or physical signals that contradict or emphasize the speaker's words. They may only amount to a remote flavor of the emotions that the other person is experiencing. This means that the speaker could be inadvertently hinting at their true feelings, not in an attempt to mislead but they are not really aware of their own emotions. On the other hand, of course, they may be determined to hide their genuine opinions; one thing you can be sure of is that the slight expressions emitted through body language often contain more truth, regardless of the meaning conveyed by speech. The effective listener is always alert to change. It could be the smallest rise in tone or adjustment in posture, but the meaning behind any alteration will often speak volumes to the focussed ear.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Listen intently to links or associations to which the other person may refer. Ideas and suggestions may then arise which even they may not have considered, which can be brought into the conversation at the appropriate time
- By listening hard and internally establishing links between different ideas, small hints and clues about hidden meaning, contradictory arguments and opinions may become apparent and give the listener the opportunity to ask incisive questions
- Search for underlying themes in what is not being said, i.e. Ones revealed only by issues, which the other person is avoiding – use this information to understand and ask further questions
- Look out for the minor, less obvious body language indicators, assessing their relationship to the verbal message and to the speaker's regular physical communication
- Become aware of changes in the speaker's tone of voice – a rise in pitch, say, is a good indication of their expressing views which they do not truly believe or of their having reached uncertain territory
- Bear in mind that emotional expression is usually understated and be ever vigilant in spotting minor pauses, emphases and change of tone during talks on subjects of greater concern to the speaker



4 Reading the Speaker

I watch the speaker's general body language to see the "full" communication

People will often give away a lot about their general feelings not by their words but by their general body language. This ranges from subtle signals in their eye movement or expressions to much more obvious signals given by their whole body or exaggerated movement by hands and feet etc.

To read body language, you need to check to see if the speaker has really said what's on their mind by comparing the words spoken, the way they were spoken and the body language that went with them. The speaker's body language may be telling a different story to their words. The speaker may have been unwilling to express their private thoughts or feelings despite your efforts to encourage open communication and understand the speaker. These inconsistencies are signals that show the speaker may be finding it difficult to talk about the issue, may be confused or that their thoughts, ideas and feelings may not have been fully expressed. Hence, the need is to look for clues in what is not being said, but communicating loudly by other means.

Consider the following to improve your general effectiveness in this area:

- Make associations between body posture, e.g. Casual and relaxed, and the message in order to establish the speaker's true feelings
- Where possible, contrast the speaker's demeanor with the characteristics normally displayed during previous conversations and discussions
- Consider how closely coordinated the speaker's hand and body movements are with the verbal content of their communication
- Make it a habit to become conscious of your own body language when speaking and compare it with others
- Progressively learn to recognize that individuals' often say more with their gestures, eye movement and general physical communication than they do with their words. If necessary, get a good book on body language and learn the main signals that are commonly used.

