

# WiP THEME: *Listening*

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**Effective communication is key to leadership. How do we create a climate of effective communication for ourselves and also for other people we work with? Let's start by exploring listening. Listening is not the same as hearing. What is the value of listening? Here are some ideas for exploring these questions with your Women inPower chapter:**

**1. Host a discussion. Some sample questions you can ask your group:**

- Do you think you are a good listener?
- What are the important aspects of good listening?
- How do you know when someone is listening to you? Do you do that in return for others?
- Could you share a story about a time listening paid off for you? Or you learned something surprising by listening?
- Do you have an example of a time another leader listened, and how did you know that listening was happening? What was the outcome of that effective listening?
- Write down the names of three people you think are good listeners (make sure everyone comes up with three!). Did anyone write down the name of someone they don't like? Did anyone write the name of someone they like, love or respect? How does listening impact our view of others? Ourselves?

**2. Work through an activity together.**

- Divide the group in two, the As and the Bs. Separate them, so they don't hear each other's instructions.
- Ask the As to think of a topic they are passionate about and to be ready to speak to one of the Bs about it for three to four minutes without interruptions or questions from B. Ask the Bs to listen to what A has to say, and each time the B feels the desire to ask a question or the talk of A makes them think of something, B should raise her hand and keep it in the air for five seconds and then put it back down. B should do this for the entire conversation. (Additional option: You could also tell the Bs that you will give a one-minute warning, at which point they could start to ignore the speaker, look out the window, focus on something on their clothing or fidget.)
- Bring the two groups back together and pair up As with Bs. Do the three-to four-minute talking-listening exercise.
- In the full group, ask the As to talk about how it felt to talk to B. What emotions were evoked?
- Run the exercise again. Either in the same pairs or mixing them up again. This time, allow the As to interact, ask questions, become involved in the conversation.
- In the full group, discuss and compare the experience of the two conversations.

**3. Invite a speaker to talk about his/her experience. Some ideas for people you can ask:**

- A family therapist or leadership coach. How do they teach people to actively listen? What difference does listening make to their careers and the careers they witness?
- Ask your chapter for ideas. Pool your connections and identify someone you may already know.

*How did it go? Did you find something worked particularly well or not so well? Did you follow the script or make up your own? What did your group learn? Share your experiences in the Women inPower Facebook group so we can all learn from each other.*