



# THE PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANT SERVICE EXCELLENCE



## The art of listening

### OBJECTIVES

After studying this module, assistants will:

- Understand how important listening is to effective communication
- Be able to master the skill of listening.

**Listening is not the same as hearing.** Listening is about receiving and accurately interpreting the communication from your customers. It requires focus. Listening means paying attention not only to what is being said, but also to how it is being said, the use of language and voice, and how the person uses his or her body when speaking. In other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Listening is the ability to receive and interpret messages accurately in the communication process and it is key to all effective communication

Good listening skills can lead to:

- Better customer satisfaction
- Greater productivity with fewer mistakes
- Increased sharing of information.

Without the ability to listen effectively, messages can easily be misunderstood, resulting in a breakdown of communication and the sender of the message (i.e. the customer) becoming easily frustrated or irritated.

A good listener will listen not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid. They will observe body language and notice any inconsistencies

between the verbal and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication will also provide clues to the emotional state

of the messenger (in this case, the customer), allowing you to adapt your behaviour accordingly.

For example, customers who:

- **Avoid eye contact** – could be feeling worried or nervous
- **Talk in a lower voice** – may be embarrassed about their symptoms
- **Nod their head** – are agreeing with you
- **Stand with crossed arms** – could be angry or irritated about the situation.



This module is suitable for all members of the pharmacy team who wish to increase their knowledge of communication skills and customer care. This module has been endorsed with the NPA's Training Seal as suitable for use by pharmacy teams as part of their ongoing learning. This module can also form part of your Team Tuesday training.

# The principles of **listening**

Follow these **10 steps** to effective listening

**01**

## **Stop talking.**

Do not interrupt, talk over or finish people's sentences. When the person has finished, you may need to clarify some points to ensure you have received their message accurately.

**02**

## **Prepare yourself to listen.**

Focus on the speaker and put other things out of mind. This can be particularly difficult at the pharmacy counter with other customers present and demands on your time, but try to put other thoughts out of your mind and concentrate on the customer.



## **Put the customer at ease and help them feel free to speak.**

Remember their needs and concerns and show that you are listening by nodding and maintaining eye contact.

**03**

## **Remove any distractions.**

Focus on the customer and stop what you were doing beforehand.

**04**

## **Empathise.**

Try to understand the customer's point of view and let go of any preconceived ideas.

**05**





06

**Be patient.**  
Let the customer continue to speak in their own time.



### Don't forget...

Do not jump to conclusions about what you see and hear. You should always seek clarification to ensure that your understanding is correct.

07

### Avoid personal prejudice.

Don't become irritated and don't let the customer's habits or mannerisms distract you from what they are really saying.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Adults spend an average of 70 per cent of their time engaged in some sort of communication. On average, 45 per cent of this time is spent listening, 30 per cent speaking, 16 per cent reading and nine per cent writing.

08

**Listen to the person's tone.**  
Volume and tone of voice both add to what a customer is saying.



### Get the whole picture.

One of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information. But this is exactly what's needed in a pharmacy setting to get the whole picture from a customer.

09

### Wait and watch for non-verbal communication.

Gestures, facial expressions and eye movements can all be important. We don't just listen with our ears, but also with our eyes.

10

