



QUICK WAYS TO LISTEN

LIKE A

CHAMP

CHECK YOURSELF



You may not even notice, but stress dramatically impacts your ability to tune into your partner. Are you losing it inside? Overworked? Overwhelmed? Pause for no less than five minutes and breathe. You may not be able to change your circumstances but you can calm your mind.

EYE CONTACT



I'm always surprised at how little partners make eye contact when they're trying to solve problems. If you're not making eye contact, you're not listening, you're interpreting. Make it a point to look at your partner when they talk. Be mindful of where your attention is.

MULTITASK



We're not always aware that, to listen well, we have to do two things at once: 1) manage how we feel inside; and 2) hear what our partners have to say. Your partner may say some things that upset you. Manage your emotion with your breath and listen anyway.

SHOW UNDERSTANDING



Some phrases that aren't allowed in my office are, "I understand," and "I get it." It may seem strange, but a golden rule of listening is that we don't tell our partners we understand them, **we show them** by repeating what we've heard. It takes effort because it's a new way of communicating, but it's worth the work.

ASK QUESTIONS



We often act like lawyers when our partners share, listening for holes in their argument or fact errors. Or, we'll act like an engineer, trying to solve whatever problem they're having. Instead, act like a journalist. Ask open-ended questions regardless of how emotionally difficult it is. Avoid "why" questions, which can be judgmental.

PRACTICE



All of these tools take practice. The trick is to use them when you're not freaking out on each other. So practice them when you're talking about things that don't matter so much, like where you're going for dinner or your favorite TV show.