



A MULTIFACETED GLIMPSE ON APATHETIC LISTENING

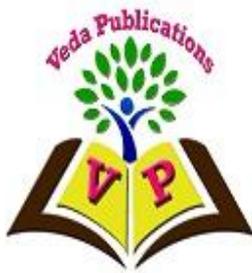
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ABSTRACT



Oral communication is one of the significant methods that play a predominant role in the process of communication. Communication is a two way process, that ineluctably involves speaking and listening. Many a time there is a breakdown in communication. This may be due to poor expression of ideas or poor listening. Even if one of the participants fails to participate in the process of communication, there arises a communication barrier. The success of a communication is firmly moored on intent listening. But people often experience communication gap with their counterparts that stains better relations. And this communication gap mainly occurs due to poor listening. There are different types of listening but apathetic listening extinguishes a message and deflates the zeal and enthusiasm of the speaker. Apathy is also associated to mental illness. The paper aims to expound the cause and effect of apathetic listening with suitable references.

Keywords: *Apathetic, Communication, Process, Listening, Oral.*



INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the important ingredients that makes a communication successful. But from personal to professional arenas people often experience communication barriers that tarnish better relations. Some may not be adept at communicating messages effectively but even when they communicate lucidly, many a time important messages do not reach the recipient of the message. This makes the sender of the message confound regarding how to proceed further with the communication. Lack of response from the receiver of the communication nullifies a message and this is due to apathetic listening. Apathetic listeners are non listeners and disinclined to give proper response to a communication. From professional space to political space apathetic listeners create hurdles and barriers to communication. What makes a person indifferent to a message?

Body language, tone, eye contacts, facial expressions are the major factors for effective communication giving cues to the messages delivered. Apathetic listeners quell the enthusiasm of a communication. Their non expressive countenance deflates the liveliness of a communication. This paper is an attempt to evince the cause and effect of apathetic listening.

CAUSE AND EFFECT OF APATHETIC LISTENING

Experts from the field of Medicine opine that apathy may occur due to mental illness. People with schizophrenia disorder show little interest in the happenings around them. Apathy may also occur due to depression which makes people lose interest in the events around them and have a tendency to seek solitude avoiding social relationships. Such mindset poses a great danger to the society as it is difficult to handle such people.

INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC GADGETS

Apathy is closely associated to lack of interest in decoding a message. It is always an enigma to the communicators while pondering the causes of apathy at a work place because one cannot find a definite reason for apathy. Nevertheless, with the advent of modern technology the characteristics of human communication have undergone a massive change where face to face communication is

diminishing paving way to the communication through social media such as face book, twitter etc.,

The basic skills of *listening, reading, speaking and writing* are stealthily waning from the canvas of communication in the society. But, people are oblivious to such changes that occur in communication as their interest is pivoted on electronic gadgets. Though experts firmly believe that modern technology has brought a great revolution in communication as people can communicate across the world easily and fast, too much exposure to the electronic gadgets has adverse effect on the physical and mental health of the people. Overuse of electronic gadgets creates Fatigue, sleeplessness and lack of physical exercise make a firm dent on the concentration that erects a barrier to listening.

Parents and teachers are often perplexed with the indifferent attitude of the youths. One could surmise that this may be due to generation gap but it is essential to know on what occasions the youths prefer to stay put and keep their mind closed to conversations. Parents and teachers from old schools tend to advice on different issues which do not appeal to the youths. Their proximity to electronic gadgets has become a treasure trove of knowledge that imbibes *I know all attitude* making them apathetic listeners.

At working place apathetic listening creates a gulf between the superior and the subordinate. On some occasions superiors are frustrated with their subordinates' careless attitude. Orders and instruction are not adhered diligently resulting in failure of the project. Even during important conferences and meetings the participants and members are glued to their mobile phones reading messages numbing their senses which rather make them insensitive and careless even to the burning issues. People holding high office many a time are found viewing their mobile phones during important meetings not paying heed to the messages thereby conveyed. The apathy of people is increasing due to the technology enabled communication. People shooting videos of accidents or mishaps instead of rushing for help often hit the headlines of the news. A teenager was lying bleeding to death on the road in Koppal district, Karnataka hit headlines of the news



paper on 2nd Feb.2017. The perverse fascination of shooting videos of dying people instead of rushing to help them certainly rings alarm of concern as such mindset indeed poses a great threat to the society. In another incident one of the witnesses at a road accident scene was disgusted to see people taking pictures and recording the scene rather than helping the victims of the accident. People with social consciousness are really concerned with considerable increase of apathy. Emotions and feelings are vanishing from the psyche of the people. When people derive pleasures from others' sufferings *sadism* arises. This state of mind is very dangerous as people with such mentality do not take cognizance of others sufferings and pain.

SELFISHNESS AND CARELESSNESS

Selfishness and carelessness is also one of the reasons for apathy. Sir William Osler (1849–1919) once said, "By far most dangerous foe we have to fight is apathy —indifference from whatever cause, not from a lack of knowledge, but from carelessness, from absorption in other pursuits, from a contempt bred of self-satisfaction." People are so much ensconced in *self* insulating them from other important responsibilities. *I can but I won't* is the attitude of such people. Such people don't care for anything except themselves. People indulge in *self* and do not take any efforts to understand the problems and difficulties of others. Such attitude is very dangerous to the society. Poets in English Literature have duly registered the fact that remaining silent when something is going wrong is a sin. Ella wheeler Wilcox has asserted that being silent is a sin,

To sin by silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men

Social injustice is mounting up because of indifferent attitude of people and the subsequent silence. Selfishness and self-centeredness harbors apathy among people as they do not pay heed to any major social issues unless they affect them.

LOW MORALE

Low morale, lack of motivation and energy, low esteem are some of the reasons for the apathy of the employees. These employees are harbored by *defeatist attitude* that make them lose interest in their jobs. They are detached, aloof and mentally

closed to any communication. Hence, it becomes a difficult task for the superiors to communicate with such subordinates.

RIGID AND STERILE ENVIRONMENT

Rigid and sterile environment sometimes intimidates the employees. Many a time such *too perfect* environment fuels fear and diffidence among employees. Under such conditions they pretend to carry on with their cool countenance to hide their fear and discomfort. This fear benumbs their sensations making them apathetic. When superiors try to communicate with such subordinates they just confront cool and expressionless face of their subordinates that makes difficult for them to understand if their messages are decoded properly or not. If the superior is from egalitarian culture he expects feedback and participation in all activities from his subordinates but if the subordinates are from hierarchical culture they keep silent and expect the superior to take the lead. Diverse cultures have strong impact on language and communication. The feeling of **Job insecurity, diffidence and the fear of losing respect and support** of others extinguish the spirit of the staff making them indifferent to communication.

CONCLUSION

The success of a communication depends on listening and feedback to the message delivered. Apathetic listeners quell the spirit of communication. Various factors pertaining to apathy have been briefly discussed in the paper. This attitude is accruing day by day making people robotic. This mentality poses a great threat to the society. Younger generations being wary of expressing their feelings prefer to remain cool without revealing their feelings is very common today. Julius fast in his book on *Body Language* observes how people wear masks and pretend to be indifferent to the message. This attitude arises when they do not give importance to the people around them. Apathetic listeners are listeners who can listen to messages but prefer not to listen. Humanity subjects are waning from the society making people more commercial in their approach. In view of the proverb *Money is a good servant but a bad master* state the fact that one should not blindly go after money and should be encouraged to pursue his/her interest and strive to contribute for the



development of the society. Exchange of knowledge and information is very important for a healthy society. Apathy can be eliminated if people develop a sense of responsibility towards the welfare of the society.

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