

Takeaway #2

Hold the Silence

Remaining silent and allowing the other person to speak is the key to genuinely hearing the message. If the speaker has a difficult or emotional point to get across, it will be difficult to 'hear' the real message if we are talking ourselves. Coupled with that, when we speak we will be tempted to 'fix' the problem and that will be difficult if we haven't fully understood the message in the first place. We suggest practicing counting to 8 before you speak and see if it changes the direction of the conversation and improves the outcomes.

Activity

Get your team practicing holding silence as a tool for better listening with this light-hearted activity

1. In pairs, with one person the 'asker/commenter' and the other person the 'responder' ask them to ask and answer the following questions without thinking and as quickly as possible.
2. Then ask them to ask and answer the same questions but counting silently to 8 before they answer them
3. Then ask them to complete the debrief question below
4. (Google the answers afterwards!)

Resource Sheet – Hold the Silence

1. Tell the person next to you that you are going to ask them a series of questions and they must answer as quickly as possible. Don't discuss the answers.
2. Then ask them to answer the same questions after a pause of about 8 seconds.

- *How are you?*
- *What do cows drink?*
- *What do you put in a toaster?*
- *How can someone go 8 days without sleeping?*
- *Some months have 31 days, some have 30 days, but how many have 28 days?*
- *What do you sit on, sleep on and brush your teeth with?*
- *Who is bigger, Mr Bigger, Mrs Bigger or their baby?*
- *What word is spelled incorrectly in every single dictionary?*
- *What would you do if I gave you \$1 million now?*
- *That's a nice jacket you're wearing.*

Discuss:

What do you notice about the different answers? Are they the same? Are they longer or shorter? How could silence be a tool for better communication?