

Megan Hills interviews

Aggie Lim

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Handle tough times with an open ear

Learning to listen will stand you in good stead during tricky situations. Aggie Lim understands just how challenging being a good listener can be. She learned a valuable lesson when she was running late for an important meeting and someone ran into her car.

“My stress levels were high” Aggie explains. “Suddenly, a car turned into my lane and hit me. I got out of the car ready to vent my anger, but then noticed the other driver looked really upset. Rather than telling her off, I said, “You must be feeling as shaken as I am.” She replied, “I’ve just come from the doctor. He told me I have breast cancer.”

It was a great lesson for Aggie in taking a moment to find out where the other person is coming from in a tough situation. The same rule applies at work, Aggie says.

Aggie’s top 3 listening tips for managers in tough situations:

1. Be prepared

Do your homework on your understanding of the person, the issues and what you’d like to be done differently. Minimise interruptions. Decide on what you’d like as one of two constructive outcomes. Then plan how you’ll open the conversation.

2. Identify what it’s about

Clarify what the issue or behaviour is really about – there’s usually something else going on. Always focus on the issue and not the person.

3. Listen with both heart and mind

- **Use the mind** to understand the situation as objectively as possible. For example, ask appropriate questions to look at what’s getting in the way and discuss options for resolution.
- **Understand with the heart** where the other person is coming from and what’s happening in their life (not just at work). Maintain their integrity and allow them time to absorb what’s been said.

As Aggie says “It’s best to put aside your own judgments, be clear that this is a two-way conversation and be totally present for them.”

What Aggie says about working with Eleanor Shakiba

“Eleanor is always listening to people’s stories, as well as telling her own. By sharing her real life stories in her training, she helps people make a connection to new ideas. A safe space is created, so you feel you can tell your story and be heard too.”

Book a listening skills course for your team
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