

Follow the Blinking Words

You're busy, maybe even overwhelmed. How can you quickly and easily become a better listener? Try using a technique called "follow the blinking words." Practice

the exercise with co-workers,

and then apply it to conversations with members.

For example, if a co-worker says, "This project is a nightmare. I can't

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wait for it to end," follow these steps:

1. Identify one word that blinks (stands out): "This project is a nightmare. I can't wait for it to end."

2. Ask about one of the blinking words: "What makes it a nightmare?"

3. Listen for blinking words in the answer: "It's a nightmare because of the member."

4. Question one of the blinking words: "What about the member makes this hard for you?"

5. Listen to the answer: "He complains about everything. Then he demands more information."

6. Identify one blinking word in the answer and question it: "Tell me about his biggest complaints."

7. Continue, as appropriate.

By following the blinking words, you delve deeper into the problem or story. People

believe you heard them and that you care enough to listen and maybe even help.

You can't make a mistake with this technique. If you follow the wrong word, the other person will correct you by elaborating on what he or she really means.

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