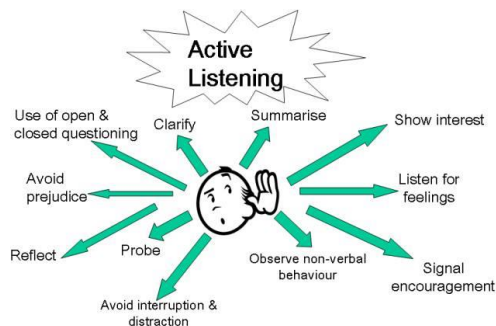
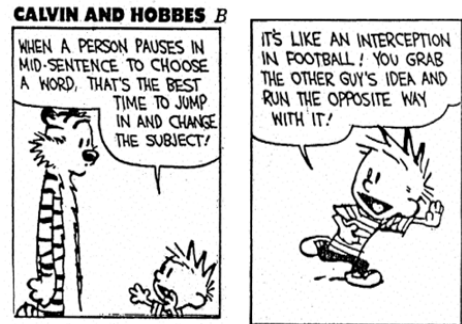


*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. - Ezekiel 3*

The other day I received a phone call from a physician, let's call him Dr. Fix-it. He wanted to know if the two of us could meet over a cup of coffee. I am always interested in sharing a cup of coffee or tea as it reminds me of time spent with my grandparents around our old kitchen table just listening to the adult conversations. So, of course, we arranged to meet, and the conversation quickly turned to a recent visit he had with his old friend, Jack. Dr. Fix-it explained that he and Jack were reminiscing when his friend became quiet. Dr. Fix-it shared the rest of the story something like this:

*I immediately started to fill in the silence, talking about my family and some crazy stories from work. I was aware that I thought it was unusual for Jack to be so quiet, but I just kept talking. After several minutes, Jack looked at me directly and said, I have something I really want to talk about, but you aren't making it easy. Dr. Fix-it said he remembered that he took a breath and said, "so just spit it out already". Dr. Fix-it noticed that Jack seemed to sigh, and he spoke slowly and quietly sharing that he had recently gotten a devastating diagnosis and that his wife of many years had said she didn't know if she could stay with him as he went through the treatment. Dr. Fix-it shared that he immediately said something to the effect of well we can figure it out. I know some people who can help with treatment options, you know that. And my wife and I can talk to your wife, we know good lawyers if it comes to that, and on and on. Jack just sat there still and quiet. Tears were in his eyes and Dr. Fix-it said I just kept saying things like, it's OK. You will figure it out and I can help. After a few more minutes Jack said, "OK, I guess I will just get going now and I'll call you soon." Dr. Fix-it said he felt terrible and didn't know what to do, but suddenly thought about active listening.*



*Dr. Fix-it said he reached out and touched his friend's arm and said, Jack, let's start at the beginning and please tell me all that you know and what it has been like for you learning about all of this. He said Jack looked at him for a second longer and then started to tell him the whole story. Dr. Fix-it said he didn't speak again for several minutes, only nodded and grunted occasionally. After Jack had finished his story, Dr. Fix-it asked a couple of questions and listened more. He told me he once again touched his friend's arm and said, I am*

*so sorry that you have been living with all of this alone for this long. I am sorry I wasn't listening. He said Jack smiled and simply said, but you are listening now, and I can't thank you enough for that my friend!*

How many times do we find ourselves in the position of Dr. Fix-it thinking we need to help, or fill a silence or void in the conversation? And how many times are we Jack where we desperately need to be heard and nothing more? Dr. Fix-it and I talked for a while longer and he suggested that I share some of the active listening tips with you all this month in the newsletter. Thank you for listening today to one person in your life. I KNOW it makes a difference! And, thank you for all that you do!

*Kathy*

[Click here for more active listening tips.](#)



**The Center for Physician Wellbeing**  
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