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[MUSIC PLAYING]

Let's go. Let's get it. Let's get it.

There's a secret to good communication, no matter where you work. It's not how you speak or how you look. It's how you listen. Take it from Dani Sher. Her listening skills have launched her to success in two different professions that appear to be worlds apart.

My name is Dani Sher, and I am an emergency room physician assistant in Chicago. In my line of work, listening is essentially important because people's lives are at stake. People who have the worst traumas come to our hospital.

You are lucky. Because it did not go all the way through.

If you're not listening, you might miss things.

After a day spent in the emergency room, Dani puts her listening skills to work in a totally different place.

I am also an improv comedian.

We'll get there.

[KARATE SOUND]

[APPLAUSE]

I did comedy for 13 years in Chicago, toured all around the world doing comedy shows. Now I do one show a week. It's Chicago's longest-running improv comedy show.

[SHRIEKING] It's Barbara Streisand.

A lot of people would think that emergency medicine and comedy are very different and require a whole different set of communication skills. But actually the requirements to both worlds are very similar.

[INAUDIBLE]

Both worlds require a listening technique that all of us need no matter what job we do called active listening. There are three key components.

So what's going on today?

[INAUDIBLE]

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Sore throat.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

My lungs.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And I have issues to breathe.

First and foremost, you have to focus. And you have to be able to quiet the mind.

OK take some deep breaths, please.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

I do want to look in your throat, though, as well.

It's very common for us to zone out because we're at lost in our own thoughts. And I think that is a very valuable skill to silence your own noise.

OK, stick your tongue way out. Now say "Ahh."

It's very important to really be focused when a patient is talking to you. Because you might miss some tiny little detail which could be the key to figuring out what's going on with them.

It looks like you might have a little bit of strep throat.

And then in comedy shows, you have to really be focused so heavily on what your scene partner is saying.

Where'd it go?

What?

Where, I mean, where does all that stuff go?

It's so easy to have your own thoughts get in the way of connecting with what somebody else is saying.

Did she just go?

If you're not focused, you could be missing a little nugget that would be perfect for later in the scene.

It's like one minute she's here.

[LAUGHING]

[INAUDIBLE]

So what's going on today?

I just busted my lip last night.

What were you doing?

I fell off a stool.

Oh, in a--

In a bar.

In a bar?

Yeah.

OK.

Avoiding judgment is a huge tenet of active listening. Would you mind just lying down and let me take a look?

Do you drink every day?

No.

If you're kind of lost in the judgment of it, that's when you're losing that ability to do the best thing for them. Are you just visiting?

Yeah, I'm from Ireland.

Well, you'll have a little scar to remember your time in Chicago.

[APPLAUSE]

OK, ladies. Ladies, get in a half circle.

And then in improv, avoiding judgment is usually important as well. Because you can be on scene with somebody and they have this idea that is so, so ridiculous. If we say his name three times, he will appear.

Austin Powers.

[LAUGHING]

Austin Powers. Austin Powers.

And it may be ridiculous. But you have to avoid the judgment of that person or their idea and just do it.

Dustin Glowers.

[LAUGHING]

OK. So the X-ray of the hip is not altogether normal, and they're recommending an outpatient MRI.

There is a wealth of information that I think people communicate to each other that is nonverbal.

He's going to be shut down so there's no more amusement parks-- Not that we don't want to go. I don't think we're going to be able to do any of this for a while.

People's body language, their tics, their fidgets.

It's not necessarily he can't have a life or have fun.

You really may have to read between the lines to put together their story.

But I would just say let your symptoms guide you. If something's hurting, don't do it.

We are sisters. Yes we are.

The same goes an improv. Body language is really important. It can really change the tone of the scene and the message of that character that you're trying to put together with what you're going to do next.

We've got to talk about some other moves you can do. OK?

OK, cool. Can we do it over Capri-Suns?

Yeah, of course.

OK.

You got to toss me one though, bro.

[LAUGHING]

Active listening is key to success beyond the ER and the stage. Dani's improv teammates use it in their day jobs too.

I work at a software company.

I'm a software developer/manager.

I've been a teacher for over 20 years. The same techniques that we use onstage translate really well to the workforce.

And no matter where you work, good communication starts with active listening.

It teaches us to listen with open minds. And be respectful of whoever we're working with. Active listening is a lifelong skill to try to improve upon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]