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BY DR. SHELLY

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# MAKE THEM LISTEN!

## Let's Start With the Why

### Why You're Here

Let's face it. You want to be heard. The truth is, they aren't listening. Why not? Is it what you said? Is it how you said it? Is it your presence? Yes.



*You can make them listen to you.*

This happens to everyone at one point. You're in a meeting, a familiar topic comes up, you chime in with your comment. You get no response. The meeting goes on and a moment later, someone else says the exact same thing but phrases it differently, and the comment is the highlight of the meeting. Does this sound familiar?

This situation can happen just about anywhere: in a business meeting, in a social setting, in school, or with your family. There are a few reasons for this. Hear me out and don't shoot the messenger. Accepting and understanding the why behind this situation is the first step to making a change that will **make them listen** to you. In these settings, there are some basic dynamics at play. Understanding these dynamics and the respective roles will help you to engage and connect with them.



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## The Basic Dynamics

Personality Type	Gender	Descriptors
Machismo	<i>Male</i>	Commanding. Aggressive. Dominant.
Bravado	<i>Male</i>	Arrogant. Overconfident. Intimidating.
Assertive**	<i>Male or Female*</i>	Confident. Direct. Decisive.
Passive	<i>Male or Female*</i>	Tolerant. Accepting.
Submissive	<i>Male or Female*</i>	Unconfident. Indecisive.

All traits in this table are considered at the most basic and fundamental level. There are additional considerations.

\*This includes those who identify as female.

\*\*This can also include a turbulent personality.



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## Understanding the Dynamics

### A Brief Analysis (SWOT)

Understand the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Each Personality Type: SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Machismo	A need to dominate. A need to compete. A need for control.	Gain their confidence. Understand their perspective. Find middle-ground.	Intolerant of others, especially women. Resistant to change and empowerment.
Bravado	Overcompensation. A need for admiration.	Highlight a mutual strength and use it to forge a bond while providing them praise.	Demeaning to others, especially women. Dismissive.
Assertive	Can demonstrate turbulent behavior. Can be overly optimistic. May overlook problems.	Articulate vigilance and highlight foresight and awareness to engage them.	Women* can be perceived negatively. Women* are more likely to be challenged, especially by men.
Passive	May not voice valuable concerns or ideas.	Ask questions and engage in discussion.	Potential and contributions never realized. May not fully engage.
Submissive	Gives in to others. May praise the unworthy.	Find their motivation. Persuade them in confidence.	May enable bravado and machismo types over those more deserving.

*\*This includes those who identify as women.*



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## The Reality of Why They Don't Listen

Women are more likely to be challenged and less likely to be heard, especially in male-dominated career fields (I speak from decades of experience and expertise).

In some instances, bravado or machismo males may dominate a discussion and seemingly win over the group, but a sidebar discussion may override their decisions while allowing the overly confident male to achieve his domination.

## How Can You Reach Them?

Following the SWOT table, find the opportunities to reach these personalities. In business, this is critical to gaining a seat at the table and the floor during a discussion. You may have to do some advance research, but this will pay you dividends in your quest to make them listen. Let's face it, you are who you are. Your personality is what makes you who you are. But there are things you can do personally and professionally to make people listen to you and take what you say seriously.

**In addition to the SWOT table, here are some things you can do:** Grab their attention. Make the first thing you say compelling and valuable. Think of ways to articulate it so that it is brief and noteworthy. Don't speak unless you are going to contribute something valuable. Don't speak just to be argumentative or play the devil's advocate. Let someone else do that unless it honestly contributes to the discussion's goal and isn't rhetorical.

Understand your personality style and be cognizant of the statements you might make inadvertently to diminish your own value. For example, don't start off your statement with, "This probably isn't important, but..." or "Not sure if this is helpful, but..." Those statements will immediately cause others to stop listening and even interrupt you during your statement as you yourself don't know if it is valuable. They may appear to be listening, but they really aren't. They are forming their own statements while you talk and you might be where they get their idea.

On that note, make sure to listen while people are talking. As you are well aware, listening is a skill. If you do it well, you can tie others' statements into your own, showing them you heard them while pulling them in and piquing their interest. By using their thoughts and contributions, you're grabbing their attention while at the same time gaining their approval. This is a useful tactic for any personality trait and at any level.



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## Understanding Your Presence: What You Need to Know

Perception is reality. Your presence is how you are perceived by others. Whether you like it or not, it is a reality. Understanding how you are perceived involves more than looking in the mirror. You may have to see a recording of yourself interacting with someone, answering questions, or during an interview to know your unique mannerisms. Knowing the culture of your environment (organization, social setting, or school) is key to understanding how and where you fit in (and how well). Recognizing how you will be sized up will help you understand how you will be perceived. When you speak, know what may affect your ability to be heard. What is in the table below is a general guide, but every setting is different and in some cases, most of what is in the table doesn't matter. In some cases, it does, and that's typically in the business world. Know how you will be perceived to help you **make them listen** to you.

Demeanor	Appearance	Age	Gender	Voice & Language
Mannerisms (Do you make random hand gestures? Do you fidget? Do you make eye contact? Do your eyes wander? Do you nod in agreement?)	Hair (Is it kept or unkept? Is it neat and styled? Is it clean or dirty/oily?)	With age comes wisdom, but do others perceive you as too young or old for the topic?	Do you feel the need to dominate based on your gender? Do you feel the need to be submissive based on your gender?	Are you too loud or quiet? Are you loud enough for the setting?
Posture (while standing or sitting)	Nails (Are they manicured? Do you bite them? Is the paint chipping? Are they cut even or broken?)	Maturity (Are you acting your age? Is your behavior appropriate for your age?)	Women have historically had subservient roles in the workplace. Know that others may not have the belief women are as capable.	Voice fluctuation (Do you sound like you're asking a question rather than making a statement?)
Do you display nervousness (i.e. - pacing, leg kicking), stoicism (i.e. - facial expression, calmness), or confidence?	Attire (Is it fashionable? Is it appropriate? Is it dirty? Is it wrinkled? Are there holes in them?)	Experience (Do you have the most or least experience in the setting?)	Are you a female* in a male dominated career field or setting? Are you a male who has a non-dominant personality?	Pronunciation (Do you properly pronounce the letters and enunciate your words?)
Approachability (Are you scowling? Are you visibly upset or irritated?)	Face and Facial Hair (Is it clean? Is your makeup appropriate for the setting? Is the facial hair trimmed or neat?)	Expertise (Do you have the expertise others perceive as necessary for the topic?)	Know there are men who still have biases that are inconsistent with reality. Sometimes it's so subtle you question if it's happening.	Do you use slang? Is it appropriate for the audience or setting?



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## Take Action

If you believe you aren't being heard for any of the reasons described, it's time to take action.

### What You Can Do

Based on your personality type, there are some things you can do as described below. This list isn't all-encompassing and can be modified based on your unique circumstances and personality characteristics. You don't have to change who you are to make them listen. These are just some tips to help you to be heard.

Personality Type	Start Doing	Stop Doing	Action
Machismo	Listen to others. Empower others. Be open-minded to new ideas. Respect others.	Stop the need to be in control or dominate in everything.	Listen to others. Empower others. Mentor others.
Bravado	Take a step back. Be tolerant. Respect differences. Respect others.	Don't dismiss others. Stop intolerance.	Be nice. Understand everyone has something to contribute. Listen.
Assertive**	Reflect. Consider other options.	Stop assuming what you see is all there is.	Actively listen to others. Accept advice and ideas from others.
Passive	Speak up. Contribute to discussions. Share your ideas.	Stop letting others make the decisions and speak for you.	Think ahead about what is important to you. Visualize your ideas being implemented. Work on confidence building techniques.
Submissive	Don't give in. Speak up for what's right. Reflect on your own thoughts and align only with those who have your interests in mind. Increase your confidence.	Stop giving others unwarranted attention and undeserved praise. Stop dismissing your own ideas and letting others use yours as their own.	Be more assertive. If you are female, learn the strengths and weaknesses of the other personalities and recognize biases. Make it known when you are not heard.



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## How Can You Reach Them?

Just like a statement used to grab attention, you can literally use hand gestures and body language to immediately grab attention. This is a skill and must be used appropriately with a quick jab of effective words. Stand up (slowly and with a smile, looking around the room; too abruptly may be aggressive). Look them in the eye.

Place one hand on the table in front of you as if you are commanding their attention, briefly make your profound statement. Don't allow anyone to interrupt and if they try, keep talking. When you're done, give another gesture to indicate you are now giving the floor back to them (arm extended, palm facing up).



## You Can Make Them Listen!

You have the tools to make them listen and to help you to be successful in your endeavors.

### For More Knowledge

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