



# Attentiveness

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**CORE**  
BY STRATA LEADERSHIP

Attentiveness is a character quality essential to creating and demonstrating value. When you are attentive at work, you demonstrate that you value a job well done and are willing to concentrate on tasks in order to minimize or eliminate mistakes. Attentiveness to people demonstrates that you place a high value on them and on your relationship.



The word *attentive* comes from the Latin *ad tendo*, which means “to stretch.” It refers to a horse turning its ears or a bird cocking its head to listen more fully. Similarly, people must stretch both body and mind to concentrate on the person or task at hand. Attentiveness can help you notice details that would otherwise be missed. The information we collect on anything, even something simple, depends on our attentiveness – which in turn helps us make informed decisions, do quality work, and build relationships at work and at home.

**Opposite:** ignoring, inattention, carelessness, negligence

**Related Concepts:** alertness, concentration, consideration, diligence, heedfulness, vigilance, looking intently

**Summary:** Paying close attention to what you are doing or to another person.



*“Tell me to what you pay attention  
and I will tell you who you are.”*

- Jose Ortega y Gasset

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**Jose Ortega y Gasset** (05/1883 – 10/1955) was a Spanish philosopher during the time that Spain was oscillating between monarchy, republicanism and dictatorship. His father was director of the Spanish newspaper *El Imparcial*. (Wikipedia).

**Other Attention Quotes:**

"I am going to try to pay attention to the spring. I am going to look around at all the flowers, and look up at the hectic trees. I am going to close my eyes and listen." – Anne Lamott

"Your children can be around you all day, but if you don't spend quality time with them and you don't pay attention to them and talk to them and listen to them, it doesn't matter that they're just around you." – Brandy Norwood

"An expert is someone who has succeeded in making decisions and judgements simpler through knowing what to pay attention to and what to ignore." – Edward de Bono

"I guess I'm just quite observant and I pay attention to a lot of things. Human behavior really fascinates me." – Ellie Goulding

"When you pay attention to boredom it gets unbelievably interesting." – Jon Kabat-Zinn

"I never decide if an idea is good or bad until I try it. So much of what gets in the way of things being good is thinking that we know. And the more that we can remove any baggage we're carrying with us, and just be in the moment, use our ears, and pay attention to what's happening, and just listen to the inner voice that directs us, the better." – Rick Rubin

"Pay attention to your enemies, for they are the first to discover your mistakes." – Antisthenes

"Pay attention, don't let life go by you. Fall in love with the back of your cereal box." – Jerry Seinfeld

"Empty heads, cognitive science has taught us, learn nothing. The powerful cultural and personal flexibility of our species is owed at least in part to our starting off so well-informed; we are good learners because we know what to pay attention to and what questions are the right ones to ask." – Paul Bloom

"Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are." – Jose Ortega y Gasset

"Pay attention to the beauty surrounding you." – Anne Lamott

"Pay attention to those employees who respectfully ask why. They are demonstrating an interest in their jobs and exhibiting a curiosity that could eventually translate into leadership ability." – Harvey Mackay

"I'm afraid the parenting advice to come out of developmental psychology is very boring: pay attention to your kids and love them." – Alison Gopnik

"I learned long ago to focus on things you can control and not even pay attention to things you don't." – Bryan Cranston

"We often talk about people with great memories as though it were some sort of an innate gift, but that is not the case. Great memories are learned. At the most basic level, we remember when we pay attention. We remember when we are deeply engaged." – Joshua Foer

"It's a constant, continuous, spectacular world we live in, and every day you see things that just knock you out, if you pay attention." – Robert Irwin

"You have to pay attention to the moment and make it the best it can be for you. I've been trying to do that. It's really made a major difference for me. I'm a happier person." – Tracy Chapman

"All camps are hard, that's what they're intended to be. They make you focus when you're tired, when you don't feel like doing things, and to see how long you can retain and pay attention." – Michael Strahan

"I'm saying look, here they come, pay attention. Let your eyes transform what appears ordinary, commonplace, into what it is, a moment in time, an observed fragment of eternity." – Philip Levine

"I have a God given talent and I work very hard for what I do. Anybody can run fast. It's how you run fast. I pay attention to technical things now." – Maurice Greene

"It's not accidental that products get worse over time; it's because companies stop paying attention to them. They stop caring as much about maintaining the same quality they did when they were just trying to fight for survival and no one would pay attention unless they had the best technology." – Aaron Levin

"Humility is attentive patience." – Simone Weil

"Those who are silent, self-effacing and attentive become the recipients of confidences." – Thornton Wilder

"The people who work in intelligence work are more conscious, more apt to be attentive." – William H. Webster

"Time, presence and physical attentiveness are our most basic proxies for something ultimately unprovable: that we are understood." – Tom Chaffield

"Therefore if a man look sharply and attentively, he shall see Fortune; for though she be blind, yet she is not invisible." – Francis Bacon

"Every view, and every object I studied attentively, by viewing them again and again on every side, for I was anxious to make a lasting impression of it on my imagination." – Karl Philipp Moritz

"Learning is a result of listening, which in turn leads to even better listening and attentiveness to the other person. In other words, to learn from the child, we must have empathy, and empathy grows as we learn." – Alice Miller

"So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it." – Jiddu Krishnamurti

"There are many benefits to this process of listening. The first is that good listeners are created as people feel listened to. Listening is a reciprocal process - we become more attentive to others if they have attended to us." – Margaret J. Wheatley

"Compassion may be defined as the capacity to be attentive to the experience of others, to wish the best for others, and to sense what will truly serve others." – Joan Halifax

"Surely it is time to examine into the meaning of words and the nature of things, and to arrive at simple facts, not received upon the dictum of learned authorities, but upon attentive personal observation of what is passing around us." – Frances Wright

"Your destiny is to fulfill those things upon which you focus most intently. So choose to keep your focus on that which is truly magnificent, beautiful, uplifting and joyful. Your life is always moving toward something." – Ralph Marston

"Successful people maintain a positive focus in life no matter what is going on around them. They stay focused on their past successes rather than their past failures, and on the next action steps they need to take to get them closer to the fulfillment of their goals rather than all the other distractions that life presents to them." – Jack Canfield

"Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus." – Alexander Graham Bell



# 1. Look and Listen

Active listening shows others you care about what they think. This includes good eye-contact, posture, body language, note-taking and verbal responses.

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Be an active listener. Send signals that you are paying attention to what is being said and the person who is talking. This demonstrates that you value not only what is being communicated but also the person you are talking to.



## 2. Avoid Distractions

Sometimes you have to set boundaries in order to focus on what matters. There is a time for everything, which means some things must wait.

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Distractions might include your cell phone (messages, calls, games, etc.), work that is on your mind, or something that is happening around you. It takes self-discipline to mentally put those things aside and give your attention to the person or task in front of you.



### 3. Focus on Your Work

The amount of concentration you give to a task reveals how important it is to you. Focus on your job like it really matters – because it does.

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The difference between an average employee and a great one is oftentimes the amount of attention he or she gives to the work. Be that “great” employee by being physically, mentally, and emotionally attentive to your job. You will make fewer mistakes, become more efficient and will enjoy the workday.



# Discussion Starters

1. Who is someone you know who is attentive to their job? What do they do?
2. What are some of your most powerful distractions? What can you do to minimize them?
3. What are some things you do at your job that require your full attention? What can happen if you are distracted?

## **Additional Attentiveness Discussion Starters:**

How does paying attention to someone who is talking to you communicate that you value them?

How does it make you feel when you are talking with someone and they are busy texting or playing with their phone?

What are some of the common mistakes people can make on the job?

Why is good quality control important? Whose responsibility is it to make sure the job is done correctly?

What is the opposite of attentiveness? What does that look like in your workplace or in your specific job?

How can you avoid distracting your coworkers?

How can poor attention to your work affect the quality of your products and the reputation of your organization?

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