

# LEARN BY LISTENING

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**J**ohn Wooden viewed his ability to learn from others as the source for whatever expertise he acquired. In his book *Wooden on Leadership*, with Steve Jamison, Coach put it this way:

Whatever coaching and leadership skills I possess were learned through listening, observation, study, and then trial and error along the way.

For me, the process of learning leadership continued for 40 years until the day I walked off the court for the last time as head coach — March 31, 1975. In truth, my learning continued even after that.

Indeed, Coach's learning from others never stopped. When asked the keys to successful aging at the age of ninety eight Coach responded: *Stay busy, stay active, enjoy every day like it is your masterpiece, have some variety and try to learn something new every day.*

John Wooden got this philosophy of life from his father Joshua who taught him:

Never try to be better than someone else. **But always be learning from others.** Never cease trying to be the best you can be. One is under your control, the other isn't.

Joshua Wooden also reminded his son: *You'll never know a thing that you didn't learn from someone else.*

The road to great results is only through constant improvement. Constant improvement is only achieved from learning from others. When we really listen to others, we learn.

I never heard Coach Wooden interrupt anybody while they were speaking.

We must really listen; not be thinking about something else or what we are going to say next when the other person is through talking.

We learn from others by **listening to learn, not listening so we can talk next**. When we listen to learn we avoid fitting the mold of the maxim: *Too many know the last word about everything and the first word about nothing.*

In an interview with Steve Churm for a 2005 edition of the OC Metro, Coach was asked: What makes a good leader?

They must be a good listener, because the only thing they'll ever learn is what they learn from others. We should all be learning all the time. I like the statement: **"When you are through learning, you are through."**

In his book *Wooden on Leadership*, with Steve Jamison, Coach comments on consistent listening leading to consistent improvement:

It is very easy to get comfortable in a position of leadership, to believe that you've got all the answers, especially when you begin to enjoy some success. One of the reasons it's extremely difficult to stay at the top is because once you get there, it is so easy to stop listening and learning. Progress is difficult when you won't listen.

As Coach constantly reminded us:

*It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.*

Yours in Coaching  
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