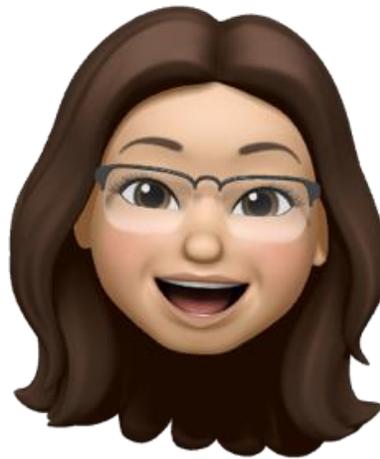




185 Frederick Street, Suite 101, Toronto ON, M5A 4L4

Tel: 416 637 3244 ■ Fax: 416 637 3243 ■ www.babinbessnerspry.com

Ellen's Positive Note #3



This is the third in a weekly series with Investment Executive to help advisors and dealers in the financial industry through this pandemic of COVID-19.

The goal of *Ellen's Positive Notes* is to lighten the mood during these difficult times and to provide you with tools to help you. If you have colleagues who do not subscribe to my e-alerts please pass this along and ask them to email me (ebessner@babinbessnerspry.com) or Kim (kmcpeake@babinbessnerspry.com).

I invite any feedback or questions or comments or other ideas you have for this new weekly column. Here it is... and **stay safe – please!**



How to listen to your clients

What your clients really need is for you to hear them, but how do you do that?

By Ellen Bessner, BABIN BESSNER SPRY LLP

(Published by Investment Executive | March 31, 2020)

This is the third in a series of [Ellen's Positive Notes](#). The first two encouraged you to pick up the phone and gave you tips on how to prepare yourself and what to say to clients during this pandemic (if you missed those, you can still read the first and second columns).

Because I do not believe in just telling you what to do, this article outlines why and how you can improve relationships with clients through this difficult time. Now more than ever, it is necessary to listen to clients and really hear them.

First, why listen?

Every person is unique, and so is their journey. Each person's experiences, attitudes and approach to this pandemic will be unique. That is why it is so important to hear each client, what they are experiencing and how they are coping.

If all you do is talk and impose your views on clients, you will not improve your relationship with them as much as if you hear them out to understand their journey. It is only after you understand each client that you can adapt your response to them, both as a confidant offering support, as well as a financial advisor considering whether to adjust your clients' accounts.

Now, the harder part — how to listen. Here are some tips:

1. Use video conferencing if you can. While this is not a requirement, it can improve the quality of communication, as your clients will see you facing the screen and taking notes on what they are saying. It also offers a human touch when many people are alone in their homes or with just one or two other people. The social aspect of video conferencing can be really helpful.

2. Be a calm version of yourself (see [Ellen's Positive Note #2](#) on how to prepare yourself). While this pandemic is very hard on you, the role you are playing with your clients requires you to give them support. To be their support, you need to be calm. Further, to actually hear people, you need to get distracting noises out of your own head. While it may not be easy, you need to do this. If you do not take this step, you will not be able to listen to your clients.

3. Be open to your client's experience. Do not allow your own experience to cloud or impact what you hear. While we are all impacted by the pandemic, you need to devote your full attention to your client's concerns and personal journey.

4. Don't judge. Even if you cannot relate to your client's reaction to this pandemic, you need to be open and listen without judging. People know when you are judging them, both from facial and body language, as well as the content of what you say in response.

5. Be empathetic. Try to feel what your client is feeling. Think about how you would feel if you were in your client's shoes. The good news is that even if you are not naturally empathetic, empathy is a habit you can learn. There is a ton of great material to help on the internet. As George Bernard Shaw said, "Do not do unto others as you would have them do unto you – they might have different tastes." Empathy is about

discovering those tastes. (See "[Six Habits of Highly Empathic People](#)" by Roman Krznaric in Greater Good Magazine.)

6. Do not interrupt or finish your client's sentences. If you have this habit, be aware of it. While I know I can be a terrible interrupter (and I mean terrible!), when I really listen, I am so engrossed with what a person is saying that I pause and take time to digest it. When you are eating, you need to chew and swallow before taking another bite. Similarly, you should take in what your client tells you and chew on it before you take your next bite. Some people interrupt because they are afraid that they'll forget something that just occurred to them. Don't interrupt — just jot your thoughts down. Otherwise you will miss the end of your client's thought, which might be different than what you expected they would say. And remember, if thoughts keep jumping into your head, that is a sign that you are not 100% listening to your client.

My next article will help you develop a plan for responding to your clients. I promise that if you practise great listening skills, your relationships will improve.

On a final note, thank you so much for all the warmth and positive responses you have sent to me by email and on LinkedIn. You can imagine that my journey through this is also hard, so it heartens me when I get your beautiful notes. Thank you!