



Listening and Speaking Skills

Why practice listening?

- To learn more about how the other person is feeling and thinking.
- To allow the other person to feel understood and accepted by you.
- To hear our ourselves in the other person.
- To support the other in resolving an issue by allowing it to simply be heard.
- To create an atmosphere of trust and set the stage for ongoing open communication between you.
- To create an exchange where truth and healing can occur.

Steps to practicing listening:

- Make time so you can really listen.
- Develop physical equality-be on the same level as the other person (seated, standing, etc.)
- Check your body language – open or closed? Stay relaxed, and at ease, send a message you are listening.
- Focus completely on the speaker. All other distractions away (phone/computer/TV/pets)
- Make eye contact, as much as you are able, without making it uncomfortable for either of you.
- Drop any expectations of yourself and the other.
- Breathe, relax, and allow the experience to be perfect as it unfolds. Nothing to fix or change.

Blocks to effective listening:

- Comparing – when you are always trying to assess vs. the other.
- Mind Reading – not paying much attention to what is actually being said – trying to figure out what is meant.
- Rehearsing – you don't have time to listen because you are rehearsing what to say.
- Filtering – When you listen to some things and not to other things being shared.
- Judging – When you prejudge someone and don't pay much attention to what they say.
- Being right - When you will go to any lengths to avoid being wrong. You can't listen to criticism.
- Dreaming – When something the person says suddenly triggers a chain of private associations.
- Identifying – When you take everything a person tells you and refer it back to your own experience.
- Advising - When you are the great problem solver, ready with help and suggestions.
- Sparring – When you argue and debate with people. The other person never feels heard because you are so quick to disagree.
- Derailing – When you suddenly change the subject. You derail the train of conversation when you get bored or uncomfortable with a topic
- Placating – “Right.. Right...Absolutely...I know..Incredible...” Really? When you want to be nice, supportive.

Co-listening

Co-listening is an experiential mental clearing and relaxation process in which the participant enters into a 'verbal meditation' which fosters self-awareness and clarity. Co-listening is an experiential process of **bonding**; it is not counseling. It is a powerful and delightful process of being with yourself and with another which can facilitate your feeling clear, loved, and loving. In order to have this experience work for you, we suggest you adhere to these guidelines.

1. **Meet as often as needed/desired for a minimum of 5 minutes each (10 minutes total).** Perhaps establish a regular time to meet. Select a quiet spot. One of you bring a watch to call time.
2. **One person agrees to be the speaker** for the first sharing, the other the listener. If you feel comfortable doing so you may choose to sit close together directly facing each other, establishing safety and a healthy intimate contact.
3. **The speaker can choose to keep eyes closed during the co-listening experience.** This can allow an internal focus and keeps the distractions at a minimum. The speaker is then more likely to breathe and relax which creates access to sensations, thoughts and emotions.
4. **Speaker then begins to speak, not filtering any thoughts or feelings, merely allowing a stream of consciousness to flow from the mind out of the mouth.** The words do not need to make "sense" or follow any order. Co-listening is a clearing process. Speaker continues this (eyes-closed)-clearing-process for the agreed upon minutes until the listener calls 'time is up'. If the speaker stops the flow of words, the process still continues for the full agreed upon minutes.
5. **There is no processing, interpreting, problem-solving, analyzing, helping, sounds, touching, discussing, or judging** during or after the co-listening process by either partner. (**Practicing your conscious listening awareness skills**) No negativity or unhealthy drama is taken in by the listener. As the listener you are practicing simply being there, allowing this special time and space. In effect, loving them through your focused, heartfelt presence.
6. When speaker's time is up reverse roles.
7. **At the end of the exercise,** notice the effect of this exercise on your body, breath and emotions. Acknowledge and thank your partner, a hug can be good! Agree to leave everything in confidence, as a sharing and a listening. There is nothing to discuss afterwards **UNLESS one of you ASKS** for practical help and support around an issue. Otherwise, separate and go on with your day.