

Expansive Listening

As we cultivate awareness of how we listen, and as we become aware that we often listen with judgment or to fix a problem, we need alternate ways of listening. Our mind wants to be a good servant, so we need to direct it and tell it where to go and, in this case, how to listen.

Listen through these ways of listening one at a time. Imagine that they are radio stations and flip through the channels, listening for what's available on each station.

You can do this in the same way that you engaged in the "Listening to Your Own Listening" activity.

Listen . . .	Suggestions
For the big picture	Listen for the whole, the interconnectedness, the intersection of systems; see the person and situation embedded within the many moving pieces; see the forest and the trees.
With love	Listen with an open heart, with the knowledge that your heart will not break and that it can hold the pain and suffering of many; be present with and understand the humanity of the person who speaks.
For pain	Listen for pain, without trying to fix it; listen to hear the raw emotions under the story.
With humility	Listen with gratitude for the trust that's bestowed on you. Be humble in the face of emotion and experience.
With curiosity	Listen without an attachment to how you think things should be right now, without conjuring up the past or clinging to notions of the future. Be willing to be surprised. Let go of assumptions.
With compassion	Suspend judgment of yourself and others, appreciating and accepting that everyone makes choices based on her knowledge and skills and what makes sense given her history and worldview.
With confidence	Listen with confidence in yourself, in your abilities to listen expansively and respond from that expansion; be confident in the other person's abilities to solve his own problems.
For relationships	Listen to build healthy relationships with others who might be resources; listen for untapped sources of strength and nourishment.

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For possibility	Listen with the conviction that there are other ways that things can be, with belief that the other person can discover those ways; listen for unseen potentials.
With hope	Listen while remaining unattached to outcomes, but with deep conviction that transformational possibilities exist that you may not perceive.

Reflect

What thoughts and feeling does this tool raise for you?

Of these various ways of listening, which one resonates most with you? Why?

Which way of listening do you want to commit to using today? Tomorrow?

Which way of listening feels the easiest?

Which way of listening feels the hardest?

How do you want to be listened to?

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