

# Are You Listening?

Revision 5



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Vancouver: Golden Age of Gaia, 2015

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# Listening with the Heart



*Written in 1987*

Streetcar going by.  
I remember that song.  
"Did I hear you say  
You completed the job?"

What made the energy so low in here?  
Am I only listening with the ear?

How dull things get when I hear that way. I think to myself:  
"Can't you say something new?  
Something different or true?  
Why do you think I don't listen to you?"

Some of the time I get to be right.  
The times when I'm not,  
I hide or we fight.  
But something is missing in all of this.  
Without it we grow apart.

How describe that thing?

A reaching out.  
A listening with the heart.  
When I listen that way,  
She seems glad that I know  
How she feels down deep inside.

Not just a listening with the ear,  
Where I catch her meaning and drift.  
There's so much more  
She seems hungry to say  
And won't without knowing I'm here.

Not caught up in my thoughts,  
Or wanting a smoke,  
Or ogling the woman next door,  
Or wondering why I don't love her these days  
The way I did at the start.

With the heart, I listen in support of her,  
In a way that buoys her in life, In a way that raises the strength in her,  
That feeds her and says she's alright.

I want to hear the all of her,  
What lies under and over the words.  
The sigh in her voice,  
The ebb and the flow,  
Her poise when she's clear and relaxed.

I want to hear the rhythm of her,  
Her song, her ballet,  
The playing of her.  
I want to know the the life of her,  
To enter and sit in her home.

# The Power of Listening



When I studied counselling for my Sociology Ph.D. program in the 1980s, I relied on Problem Solving Therapy. There I was at the side of the road trying to sell my solutions to other people, hawking my wares, and getting nowhere.

People didn't want my solutions. They wanted to tell their story. They wanted me to listen. And if I didn't they resisted and rebelled.

So, after frustrating myself no end trying to peddle my answers, I finally fell silent and began to listen. And I listened and I listened. Four hours of listening. Five hours. Eight hours once (just to prove a point to myself).

And what happened was that people's puzzles began to become pictures. Suddenly after talking and talking, a person would light up and go "Aha!" They now saw what they had been overlooking all these years.

With that, they were up from their chair and out the door. They just wanted to communicate what they had discovered. At last they now knew what had been driving them.

You recall, perhaps, that I left my Sociology Ph.D. program because I had a vision of the entire journey of an individual soul from God to God. That came about because I applied a notion of listening theory to life.

I had been listening to people as a form of restorative therapy and saw that when they found the missing piece to their puzzle, the puzzle became a picture.

I said to the universe, "If it's true that people's early lives are a puzzle, which then becomes a picture, could it be that life itself is a puzzle? And, if so, what is the picture that life is?"

I didn't expect an answer but instantly the front window of my car disappeared and I was left staring at a working model of life.

What I'm saying here isn't about that vision. It's about listening itself.

I've seen very few upsets that yielded to Problem-Solving Therapy, but few upsets that didn't yield to listening. To put the matter another way, in my view, "fixing" does not set us free, but the truth does. And the truth emerges through getting a full chance to say what's so for us to a committed listener.

Listening is one of the rarest gems around. Very few people listen. And of those who listen, very few really, really listen, I mean, listen for clues, listen for metaphors, listen to the tone of voice, listen to the feelings, watch the hand movements, look for hidden commands - there's so much to listen to and any one piece can be the one that completes the puzzle.

Like the woman who said that she used to walk into the ocean, found it cold, and would quickly run out again. Was that the way she was in relationship? And pop. She got why it was that she constantly left relationships after only a few months.

Or the number of people who have sicknesses that reflect statements like "pain in the neck," "pain in the backside," etc. Or all the people who've been called "lazy no-good good-for-nothings" and are now Type A personalities or "worthless tramps" who are now totally-indispensable members of any team they join. (How does that happen? (1)

But some of the keys are that people have to have a long enough go at it, they have to have our undivided attention, they need feedback that shows we're keeping up with them, they could use mirroring - not too much mirroring, not too many interruptions. They need something from

us every so often to show that we have a hand in the game - so we may wish to share just a foreshortened version of something that reveals an aspect of us, just to show we're a player.

But mostly it's a good long go at it that people want. So many people have never been listened to. It's sad really. Enough listening to really follow some leads where they want to pursue and a willingness to stick with it until the picture emerges.

If you listen well, people usually know nothing about it. They may say that they enjoyed having a conversation with us or that we're a brilliant conversationalist. But very often they don't know what happened.

My mother was a brilliant listener. I cannot tell you anything she ever might have said but everyone loved her and came over to Mrs. Beckow's house when she "put on a pot of coffee."

I can truly say that there are very few things I enjoy doing more than listening. It's one of the best gifts one person can give another. It's one of the most closely guarded secrets in human society. And it has more power to heal than anything I know on the Third Dimension. If the cabal knew the power of listening, they might have patented it. Or banned it.

There's nothing more satisfying that I know of than looking at someone's face light up because they now know the matter that has escaped them all their life and made their life hell.

### Footnotes

(1) It's called "living a script."

# The Power of Listening to a Skeptical Person



I was reading what discussion group members were saying about partners who may not share our perspective or support our beliefs. So many of us know what it's like to talk to a skeptical person. Maybe this is a good time to mention something that may be relevant here.

There are many ways to "be with" a person. Sharing our heart and listening are two of them. We all of us enjoy sharing, I know. We'd like to be known for who we are. Unexpressed joy, excitement, and enthusiasm can be an upset, just as much as unexpressed frustration, irritation, etc.

But when we cannot share, perhaps we could remember that sharing is only one road to satisfaction. A second road is listening.

We often fail to consider the value of listening and the way in which listening opens people up. We also don't consider the contribution listening makes to us - the joy we feel on contributing to another's wellbeing and seeing them released from pain and stress.

So, if I can't share in a situation because my partner is skeptical, what I do is switch to listening. Different road to the same destination of fulfilment.

I could write a book on what it means to listen. I listen to the tone of a message, the pitch, the emotion, the metaphors used, on and on. And what I listen for is the secret speaking.

But I don't try to interpret or project my meanings on another. I look for evidence of that secret speaking in what I just outlined and mirror back only this evidence.

I hear every statement said as a chapter heading and allow the person to develop each chapter.

I'm listening for understanding and not to advise, counsel, control, influence, etc. In fact I refrain from advising or fixing and simply "get" the other person. This is what makes listening listening.

I mirror back what I hear but not so often as to interrupt and only to show the person that I'm listening. If I've successfully mirrored back, then that particular section of what needs to be said will now be released because the person speaking knows they've been heard.

So I would listen, "get" the person's communication, mirror back what I heard, listen, get, mirror back, listen, get, mirror back, until the person has completely finished saying what they need to say and experience release.

I only ask questions when I need clarification. I don't send the speaker in a different direction than the one they want to go in by asking an intrusive or agenda-setting question. I allow them to set the agenda.

I can see where my listening is proving successful. The truth sets a person free. If I'm listening well, the person is getting more and more at the truth of the situation and will be showing more and more signs of release (being set free). They'll be perking up. Their enthusiasm will be returning, and so on.

I "follow that release." I overlook statements made that take the person deeper into the upset unless that's where they want to go. But I listen most closely to what brings release.

Eventually the person sees what there is to be seen from speaking and emerges from the down space they were in.

I take listening seriously. I give all my attention to it when I'm doing it. I know it works to relieve stress in another. And I know that it's a worthy service.

I listen to my intimates, for as long as they need. And I don't claim credit when they're done. I simply let them go to whatever is next for them.

Once a person has spoken so much that the puzzle they are dealing with has become a picture, an "Aha!", a realization, then I leave them alone. I don't send them back into the upset by asking further questions about it. I get that the work is done, the result has been achieved, and the subject at the heart of the upset should now be let go of. I allow them to leave, do what they want, remain in silence, etc., as they choose.

I personally experience as much satisfaction from listening as I do from speaking - often much more. Because listening is serving and serving raises love and compassion in oneself.

Very few people, when you listen, are aware of what you're doing. Later they say that you are a really good speaker, not even realizing that you said very few words, that they did all the talking. They gravitate towards you after that, aware that something happened with you but not knowing precisely what it was.

So if you want a low-stress way of serving your skeptical partners, of getting through this last amount of time before abundance kicks in and the full truth of 9/11 and other events is known, consider listening to your spouses rather than sharing. Sharing may not be in the cards right now but listening is always supremely valuable. And it's probably the best contribution you can make at the moment.

# Maximum Danger: Minimum Risk



*The Golden Ear Award*

I had a reading with Archangel Michael on Friday and he said we'd emerge from the Tsunami of Love “addicted to love.” The next wave is being called “the perfect storm.”

But a lot of what'll come up for some people during some of that process - me included - are their core issues, major vasanas, etc. I actually phoned my therapist brother, Paul, in Victoria, B.C. and warned him to expect an increase in clients - some leaving marriages, some feeling life's not worth it, etc.

The most important skill at this time that I can think of to assist anyone who's hurting is listening. And there's more to listening than meets the ear. I'd like to discuss some aspects of it, in this and perhaps future articles.

Listening has the power to turn the puzzle into a picture and cause a realization ... and more. It has the power to set the speaker free from the unwanted condition.

When I was studying listening back in the 1980s, I used to say that what we aimed for was allowing the speaker to present their most basic

upsets, conundrums, etc. (maximum danger) in a manner that posed the least possible risk (minimum risk). Maximum Danger: Minimum Risk.

MXD:MNR

What does it mean to listen in a manner that poses minimum risk? It means to serve as a Second Self, a "sacred partner," we'd say these days. We double, or quadruple, the person's ability to see into themselves by seeing along with them, feeling along with them. and realizing along with them. It means to listen closely but with a light touch. And it gives them the feeling of strength and courage to look at things (MXD) they might not have been willing to look at before.

The Second Self that we act as is outside the upset and holds the space for the speaker to turn the puzzle into a picture. It allows the speaker the opportunity to put everything on the table and see what they've been missing up till now.

Very few people get the opportunity to be listened to long enough to get out all that's really troubling them. Most people interrupt after a few sentences. Or they take the ball and run with it ("run away with another's share"). Or they succumb to a need to feel useful and important and give in to the desire to counsel, console, advise - everything but listen.

When I was practising to be a counsellor in my Sociology Ph.D years, I followed Problem-Solving Therapy but quickly saw that very few people were buying my solutions. After much frustration, I saw that most people simply wanted to be heard.

So I threw my solutions out the window. No one was buying them anyways. I may as well have been selling water by the river. And I began to listen.

I threw away my need to feel important and instrumental in the success of their inquiry, which they were perfectly capable of running themselves, if only someone cared to listen. I simply set about following what they were saying and "recreating" (creating anew within myself, experiencing) whatever it was they wanted to look at and feel. I might mirror back how it felt to see things the way they did. But just briefly.

I had a commitment to the truth but I also had a commitment to acting naturally. Being myself. Being who I am.

Everything they said to me was a chapter heading. I could have encouraged them to unroll any heading and had to be watchful for what was being said that was really the key. A word, a metaphor, a conclusion, a decision - you never knew when the one thing would be said that was crucial to their release from the unwanted condition.

Periodically I'd share something myself, a very small intervention, just to show that I had my hat in the ring. I didn't redirect them. I didn't take over their process. I didn't say to them "Go into your heart. Get out of your head." Everyone goes into their heart once they get a head of steam going. Their heart is where they want to get to. No one needs to be schooled in that. We're love-seeking machines.

I simply got each thing that was said and waited for the one key piece to mirror back to them.

I'd mirror back from time to time my understanding of what was said, how they looked, what they seemed to be feeling. I'd watch gestures, body language, listen to tones, the rise and fall of their voice. I might periodically hear a favorite expression or hear a significant pause, which I'd mirror back. Anything could cause the breakthrough.

Feelings are particularly important to mirror back because our mind files our upsets under "feeling" headings.

Mirroring is foolproof because, if I get it wrong, they correct me. So whether or not I get their drift the first time, I'm sure to get it as a result of their correction.

Everything they said I held in confidentiality. Nothing they said would I bring back to them in a way that was confrontive.

Never would I disagree with what they were saying because I felt in my bones that they knew what they wanted to say. They only lacked a listener, not a sense of where they needed to go with things. It wasn't that they lacked understanding of what was happening. It was more that

they lacked someone who cared enough to invest the time to hear them completely.

If only they could get the whole story out, they could see what they were dealing with.

Listening is the greatest gift one person can give another. Listening is the alchemy of transformation and the speaker is himself or herself the alchemist. We're simply the catalyst.

Listening is a very humble act. If the person got their "Aha!" all they really wanted to do was to rush out the door and tell their loved ones what they had seen. Mission accomplished. Some left without saying thank you.

Good listening is invisible. The number of people who said I was a brilliant conversationalist was legion, when all I did was listen. What conversation? Listening is not a conversation. It's the other person speaking.

Once they achieved release, I never took them back into the upset. To do so would have been to recreate the unwanted condition all over again. Release was what we aimed for and the truth of their situation was what would set them free.

The secret, if there is one, was to have a light touch, be non-threatening, be Maximum Danger: Minimum Risk. I am the listener. I think of this as "having a light touch" or "being light." That is my mission. To be Light.

# Sharing and Listening as Steps to Unitive Consciousness



*Sharing promotes love*

The primary reason I share is to persuade others to share. Hiding would be far easier and more comfortable.

Sharing and listening are what are missing in our world and I say that as a person who's first-hand experience in the area.

The three-month residential workshop that I did at Cold Mountain Institute (the Canadian equivalent of Esalen) was a crash course in sharing and listening. If I were to boil down to the one common denominator that potpourri of workshops was about, sharing and listening is what I would say.

What do I mean by sharing? Well, I don't mean gossiping or judging or advising or persuading. I do mean describing how it is for you. Sharing is descriptive. Here's where I am. Here's what's happening for me, Here's how I feel. Here's what pains me. Here's what makes me bliss out.

And by listening I also don't mean advising, coaching, persuading, etc. I mean hearing deeply what the other person says and mirroring back our

understanding. Nothing more. Who cares for my opinion or my advice when they're hurting?

When I was training to be a group leader, I saw early on that people who needed to talk did not care a fig for my solutions; they wanted me to listen. So I dropped problem-solving therapy and just began to listen. I threw out the fifty-minute hour and just listened as long as they needed it

And voila! I stumbled upon "magic" therapy. The people who left my door had huge smiles on their faces. They did not know what I did. And they just wanted to get home to tell their spouses what they discovered.

Most people, whatever they think they're doing, do not listen (period). I don't make many absolute statements but I do make that one.

Such a way of being with each other as sharing and listening is like water on the desert. People come alive in the face of it. That's why we create discussion groups. The informative aspect runs a far distant second. Sharing and listening comes first.

When people share themselves with others, love flows. When a person shares their breakdowns, their breakthroughs, or their puzzlement, just by the act of sharing, often, whatever it is that eludes them shows up.

Most people do not need advice. They need the listening space to say how it is for them - in an adequate amount of time and with someone getting what they're saying - and the answer automatically arises for them in the space of their sharing and being heard.

I often say that I hear the truth of myself as it goes past my ears. I hear it at the same time you hear it and before that I did not know it any more than you did. My shares are often just as much news to me as they are to you.

I know that I can listen for hours to people without interrupting other than to show them that I understand what they said (so they can go on to the next point) or to share a small thing so that they get the sense that I'm not hiding by listening but have my ante in the pot.

The most I listened to another was eight hours. Others four hours. And I listened for those many hours without advising them once. Whatever it takes for them to get what it is that eludes them is fine with me.

Sharing is the great equalizer. The feelings of a prince are worth no more and no less than the feelings of a pauper.

Watch what happens when the owner of a large company shares with a customer. The minute the owner says how he feels, he places himself on an equal footing with the other. That information is exactly what the customer wants and makes the owner visible and vulnerable. And visible and vulnerable is where we need to go, I say.

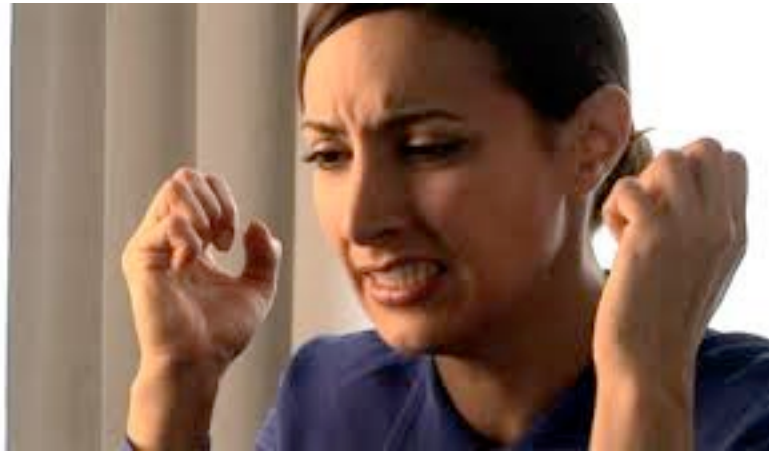
I think that's why folks in positions of authority, like policemen, will not be caught dead saying how they feel. And I also think that's why the steady diet of crime dramas on TV keep us in our male, logical brain and is probably designed to do so. No one says how they feel.

Feelings are what people want to know about most. They tell us how we're taking something. They give our point of view. They push us to act. They tell what direction we'll go in. So they're a totally important piece of information and one that most people leave out of their share.

Our shares are born equal and sharing makes us equal. And being equal is just a hop, skip and a jump from being one, I'm willing to wager. So I think sharing is a step towards unitive consciousness.

So tell me how you feel. Tell me what's there for you. What's coming up? And let me do the same. I want you to know me deeply, truly as I am. And I want to know you in the same way. I really do.

# Should We or Should We Not Listen to Stories?



A reader asked what I think is an important question that I'd like to share here. He said:

"At some point (sometimes) in the listening process it seems like the speaker is merely going in circles. That is, s/he is just continuing (wallowing?) in their 'story.' To simply continue listening, at that point, feels like I am being of little service; rather, maybe even being an enabler.

"Many teachers have helped me the most by choosing not to listen when 'my story' becomes too long winded....since this can keep me further entrenched in the illusion.

"So, while I do hugely value listening, I wonder how these approaches are compatible."

In my experience, if the person is going in circles, they're either trying to get what lies at the heart of the vasana (archaic reaction pattern born of earlier traumatic incidents) and are having difficulty or they wish to be fed back to before they move on (perhaps because what they're saying is important and they don't want us to overlook it or perhaps because they need to know we're listening before they reveal more). They may be hovering on the brink of plunging into the heart of the matter.

Repetition could signal an important juncture reached. Shall I trust this listener or not? Dare I venture into deeper waters? The worst thing they may fear is that they'll go deeper and we'll stand up and say "Time's up!"

We can always ask: "Is there significance to the fact that you're repeating yourself? Is it something I should not miss noticing?"

Every sentence a person says when talking about an unwanted condition or vasana can be treated as a chapter heading with a lot more under it if we'll listen. But we need to demonstrate that we're listening to the speaker; hence, appropriate feedback is essential. We need to demonstrate that we're there for them and that we're committed to getting to the bottom of the upset.

It could also be that the speaker is putting out an organizing principle, usually a metaphor, that they're not sure is an organizing principle and so they're waiting for us to respond to it. Or they may not get the significance of the point but sense that it's significant in some unknown way (and so they repeat and repeat).

Example: J: "In Newfoundland, we'd go into the sea and it was so cold that we'd just get our feet wet and immediately come out." Steve: "Is that how you are in relationship?" (Aha moment follows. The truth has set her free.)

I treat everything a person says in a listening session as significant. If it isn't, when the person sees I'm listening that way, they usually leap at the opportunity and go deeper anyways. I observe and may remark on body posture, hand, face and bodily gestures, pattern of rising and falling intonation, emphases, slang, everything. Never in an obtrusive manner, but with gentle questions, which I quickly abandon if offense is taken. And not so much feedback that I redirect them away from what they're wanting to say.

I know that the conventional wisdom is not to listen to story. But what we're offering the other is a chance to lay everything on the table so they can see the whole depth and breadth of their situation and what it guards them from, fosters in them, loses them, wins them, etc. Somewhere in there is an "Aha!"

When I counseled people using Problem-Solving Therapy, most did not listen to me. They simply wanted to tell their story. So why fight it? Somewhere in the story lies the key to release. And it's vastly easier and more efficient than to keep coming up with solutions nobody wants.

So I don't support the view that we shouldn't listen to story. Most people who advise against listening to story, I think, are saying they don't feel they have time to listen long. If they don't, I question whether their listening will be effective. Rushing listening diminishes its value.

Story has been formed out of the vasana and constitutes the breadcrumbs that will lead them and us out of the deep, dark forest. We just have to be adept enough to work with it and committed enough to stay with it.

The reward is great. And they will seldom get the same opportunity or results from a practitioner who uses the fifty-minute hour.

PS. Back then I didn't know how to source a vasana. But now I might say: "Ask your mind to send you up a picture of what earlier, similar situation this present incident relates to and take the first image you get." The mind is an obedient servant and will send up an image, often fast, so we need to grab it as it passes by.

Then I would ask them to tell me about that incident, how they feel, etc. That incident is usually at the heart of the vasana.

# Sharing Ourselves and Comparing Notes



## *Comparing Notes*

Recently, in a personal reading, Archangel Michael used a phrase that was either intended to inspire or raise a smile in me. He talked about "comparing notes." He was probably reading my mind because I was thinking about that subject at the time (before setting my ideas down in this article).

Comparing notes was a phrase we used in workshops some time ago. It meant to share our discoveries in the hopes that they might prove helpful or inspiring to others who might be looking at the same matter.

Sharing ourselves meant to reveal ourselves, be transparent, give the other person the information they needed to know who we are in the matter.

Both reminded us that each of us playing the awareness game was primarily interested in learning about ourselves.

Yes, we listened to others. Not saying we didn't. And we "got" them. But we didn't listen to judge or evaluate them. We listened for what we could discover about them and about ourselves - about the human condition, generally.

Why is that so important? Because we're all here to plumb this mystery called "Self," a mystery that leads all the way back to God.

Sharing ourselves and comparing notes keeps us on the trajectory that leads us home. It brings increasing self-knowledge, until it becomes Self-knowledge one day.

It sharpens the vital power of discrimination (what the Mother called "clarity") so it contributes to the purpose that we incarnated for.

We came into life to become aware of our true Self. We came into life to learn to discriminate between the Real (the Self) and the unreal (the self, the mind, the ego).

What was it Krishna said? "Lose discrimination, and you miss life's only purpose." (1) The only purpose of incarnating in life is to help us discriminate between the unreal and the Real, between the illusion and God, between our temporary self and our permanent Self.

Once a person gets familiar with this way of communicating, things get very real very quickly, very intimate and interesting.

Instead of superficial discussions or the continual, self-serving polishing of our image that takes place in "howdido" conversations, (2) we're revealing aspects of ourselves which, once communicated, empower us or, if they were withhelds (secrets), lose all power over us. Our truth is setting us free.

Most people create an image of themselves and then polish that image instead of intensifying their inner light through self-revelation.

When any event occurs - say we're boasting about how we got back at the boss, a frequent topic of "howdido" conversations - we tell and retell the story, watch its effect upon our listener, and modify it here and there with each retelling until the way we're telling it brings the desired result.

Our partner's reaction tells us that we've successfully raised ourself in their estimation and lowered the boss. Now we lock in our story and it becomes the "final and official version."

Now we "have our ducks in a row." We have our story where we want it. We have the winning ticket. Not as much truth there as wish fulfillment, but this is how many of us communicate. Or did.

People sharing themselves and comparing notes find they're no longer interested in getting into the kind of mischief that we commonly call "drama." The satisfactions that come with speaking in ways that nourish us causes the appetite for drama to diminish.

They tell the truth harmlessly at as deep a level as possible and the truth sets them free. It sets them free from vasanas, issues, and fears.

They put aside gossip. They don't mind another's business. They don't put others down and themselves up. They don't withhold what one group leader called our "dirty little secrets" - dirty only because they're withheld.

They aren't running a racket or a number and they aren't selling a bill of goods. People sharing this way tend to be sincere, open, and honest. Believe it or not, that's what an encounter group produces, despite the stereotypes of them being a pit of vipers.

Of course a person cannot share in this way or compare notes without a listener committed to the same type of communication.

So if you ask me, how do we speak as the New You? I'd say by sharing ourselves and comparing notes.

## **Footnotes**

(1) Sri Krishna in Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, trans., *Bhagavad-Gita. The Song of God*. New York and Scarborough: New American Library, 1972; c1944, 42.

(2) Conversations in which we discussed how we did. We got even with the boss. we put Sally in her place. We were acknowledged as the savior of the office. We scaled the Himalayas and brought back the truth that would set humanity free. Etc. etc. We tell the story of getting even with the boss again and again, rehearse it, get rid of the rough edges, and

then that story stands in for the truth. On and on we go creating a self-image which we think is real, when it's not.

# How to Turn a Lion into a Pussycat



Having earned the right to this brief moment of your attention by living 67 years with the actuality and memory of physical abuse, I can now impart to you the secret of turning a lion into a pussycat, an adult victim of physical abuse into a human being again. (It may be the same with those who've suffered from sexual abuse, abandonment, etc. I cannot say.)

This secret is known only to the Knights Templars, Rosicrucians and other secret societies since a millennium ago.

I received my commission from the Dalai Lama, the Lord Buddha himself and a hundred thousand bodhisattvas, all assembled in Shamballa. I am the Keeper of this Flame.

They told me that, when the time was right, I would know it and I would pass the secret on to you, those fit initiates who had also been tried in the flames of life and tested in the struggle to resurrect the spirit.

I've faithfully kept this secret close to my chest, lo, these many years. Until the time was right.

By the position of the stars in heaven and the counsel of invisible masters whom only I can see, I know the time has now arrived to impart this treasured secret to all who've labored mightily for so many years, to purify and cleanse themselves of the memory of their past injuries. You are pure. You are ready. The time is here.

Now let this secret be told.

How do you turn a lion into a pussycat?

Tell him you love him.

That's all. Don't go into a long song and dance. Just tell him you love him. OK, OK, you can say you don't want to hurt him as well. But that's enough.

I am a certified lion. I am a lion extraordinaire. Last year I pulled one ruffian out of our apartment building by his hair, turned and faced the second and had only to look at him for him to back down.

Just tonight I was harassed by two drunks at a bus stop. (I live in a rundown building in the poorest section of Vancouver. You didn't know that? Oh, yes, for seven years.)

While I'd never hurt them, no genuine karate student would, I nonetheless told them with slow speech and steely calmness, looking them straight in the eye, that they did not want to mess with me. I'm a mean bugger and they will get hurt. (Just words.)

I watched that classic switch in them that I've seen so often in others, from their abusing me to their asking for protection from me. Two drunks asking each other! Meanwhile I got up and walked away, safe.

A 67-year-old man. You gotta get that. With a capacity to be so scarey that it turns a much younger person around in his tracks.

So I think, from all angles, I've earned the right to say this.

Just tell the lion, kindly, gently, that you love him and watch him turn into a pussycat. Watch him break down and melt into tears.

I have selected all of you to be the heirs of this knowledge. Go forth, now, and tell the world.



You can send me a thousand dollars through the mail if you wish or, if you're as poor as me, you can just "get" it. A man is a lion because he feels that love has been withdrawn.

The expression of love to such a man will make him cry. Why all this happens I cannot tell you but I know it does. Someone just told me that I was loved today and it turned this lion into a pussycat.

Now all of you lions, you adult children of physical abuse, how do YOU turn yourself into a pussycat? That will take a bit more practice but is doable.

Reach down into yourself, using your inbreath, raise your love and send it out to the other on your outbreath. Do this morning, noon and night. Do it every time you find that you've turned yourself into a roaring lion.

That'll be a thousand dollars from you too, in the mail please. You should probably send it because paying for it seems to make this secret more valuable.

What turns a watered plain into a desert is the absence of the expression of love. What turns a desert into a watered plain is the presence of the expression of love. Period.

Who said love was tough?

## Jeshua via Pamela Kribbe: The Third Way



*In this seminal article by Jesus from 2012, he lays out the two ways we have of generally handling unwanted emotions: by expressing and controlling them and by suppressing and ignoring them. He posits a third way: observing and transcending them. The method this article describes is basic to completing vasanas.*

Jeshua: The Third Way, as channeled by Pamela Kribbe, July 4, 2012 - <http://jeshua.net/>

I am Jeshua. I am with you. Through the barriers of space and time, I stand next to you; feel me in your heart. I am so familiar with being human - the heights and the depths.

I have explored the whole area of human feelings, and inside that world of extremes, I eventually found a way out; a passage to a different way of

looking at things, through which the whole experience of being human presents itself in a different light - a way that creates tranquility and peace in your heart.

It is about this way out, this passage, that I would like to speak to you today. Many of you find yourselves in a dilemma; a struggle you have with yourself. There is an idea alive in your mind that you should be better, and other than what you are now.

That you should be more highly developed, holier, better able to follow certain rules, a higher ideal you have for yourself - but this is a false ideal. All this working on yourself is based on the idea that you are not good as you are; that there is something else; that you have the power to change yourself; that you have control over the fact that you are a human. This is an old idea, and one you fully experienced in a very old era.

This idea existed, in part, in Atlantis, where you developed the third eye, and where you experienced it as the center of observation in your head. From that third eye you could perceive, and from there, also, you wanted to intervene, to mold life to your wishes.

There was a certain tendency toward domination in you, but this tendency was also inspired by your concept of truth. You had the idea that you acted on the basis of higher principles, so that what you did was "good" - and so it always goes.

Power is always veiled by ideas that are thought to be good. A whole ideology is then built around such an idea, making it a worldview that appears as striving for what is good, while in essence, you are trying to control life - both in yourself and in others.

Power corrupts - it alienates you from the natural flow of life that is present in every human being. Power gives you a concept of malleability that, in fact, is based on illusion. Life, as you know it, is not pliable in that way, and is not determined by reason, or by the will, or from the third eye. Life does not fit into a worldview or a system, and it can not be organized on the basis of mental processes.

For a long time, you entered into a battle with your humanity - the human condition. Lots of spiritual paths are based on the idea that you must work on yourself, that you have to elevate yourself, and that you have to impose on yourself a planned path of action that will lead you into an ideal situation.

But this idea creates much inner struggle. If you start with the idea of a required ideal, you impose standards upon yourself you very well know inside you do not or can not meet - so you fail from the outset.

Feel, now, the energy of this way of thinking: what you are doing to yourself, what energy comes from the need to impose, from the quest to improve yourself, and from the desire to organize life, your emotions, and your thoughts. Feel the energy of wanting to control things. Is that a loving energy?

Often, that energy poses as love, as the good and the true, but power always conceals itself in this way so it is easier for people to accept. Power does not show its face openly; power seduces through thought. That is why it is better to not think about, but to feel what the desire to control life is doing to you.

Look at yourself in your daily life, in the present, in your life now. How often do you still do battle with yourself, do you condemn what rises up in you, what naturally springs up in you and wants to flow? In this state of judgement sits a criticizing energy, a coldness: "this should not be, this is wrong, this needs to go away". Feel this energy - does it help you?

I want to now take you to a different way of looking at yourself; a place where change can occur, but without fighting, without a heavy-handed tackling of yourself. To make this clear, let me give you an example.

Imagine something happens in your life that calls up a feeling of anger or irritation in you - whatever you want to name it. Now, you can react to that anger in different ways. If you are not used to reflecting on your emotions, and your reactions are very primary, then there is nothing there but anger - you are angry, period.

You are engulfed in it, and you identify with the anger. Often, it then happens that you put the cause of your anger outside yourself - you

project the blame onto someone else. Someone else did something wrong and it is his or her fault that you feel angry. This is the most primary reaction - you are identified with your anger, you are angry.

Another possibility is what I call the second way to react. You are angry and there is immediately a voice in your head that says, "this should not happen; this is wrong; it is not good that I became angry; I must suppress this."

It might be that suppressing your anger has been taught to you through your religious upbringing or from a societal perspective. For example: it is better, nicer, more morally upright not to show your anger to others. It certainly applies to women that it is not fitting to express anger openly - that it is not feminine.

There are all sorts of ideas you have been talked into, causing you to judge anger in yourself. Then what happens? There is anger in you, and immediately there wells up an opinion over it: "this is not allowed, this is wrong." Your anger then becomes your shadow side because, literally, it may not come into the Light - it should not be seen.

What happens to the anger if it is suppressed in this way? It does not disappear, it goes behind your back to affect you in other ways; it may cause you to be scared and anxious. You can not utilize the power that resides in the anger, because you do not allow yourself to use it.

You may show your sweet, nice, helpful side, but not that passionate, angry side - the rebellious side of yourself. So the anger becomes locked in, and you think you are different from other people because you have these feelings, so you might even start to distance yourself from others.

In any case, this creates a bitter conflict inside yourself, and seemingly between two selves, a Light self and a Dark self. Meanwhile, you are caught in this painful game, and it hurts inside, because you can not express yourself. It is this judgement that limits you.

Do you really become a better person because of this reaction? Is suppressing your own emotions going to lead you to the ideal of a peaceful, loving human being? If I describe all this to you, you can see

very clearly that this type of reaction does not work - it does not lead to real peace, to real inner balance.

Yet you do all this to yourself. Very often, you silence your emotions, because they are not good according to the morals you hold, and you do not reflect on these morals - where they come from, and by whom or by what have they been fed to you.

So this is what I recommend you do: to not think about it, but to feel it. Feel that energy that resides in the judgments you fire toward yourself, with your images of what is ideal and what you “should do”, which sometimes comes out of seemingly very high motives - let that be. You do not become enlightened by reining in your emotions and by systematically suppressing them.

There is a third way - a third way to experience your own human emotions. The first way was to totally identify with your anger, as in the previous example. The second way was to crowd it out, to suppress it and to condemn it.

The third way is to allow it - to let it be and to transcend it. That is what consciousness does. The consciousness of which I speak does not judge - it is a state of being.

It is a way of observation that is at the same time creative. Now, many spiritual traditions have said: be aware of yourself, that is sufficient. But then you wonder: how can that be? How can the mere awareness of myself bring about change in the flow of my emotions?

You have to realize that consciousness is something very powerful. It is much more than a passive registering of an emotion - consciousness is an intense creative force.

Now imagine again that something in the outside world evokes a powerful emotion in you - for example, anger. When you deal with it consciously, you observe it fully in yourself. You do nothing about it, while at the same time you keep observing and watching.

You no longer identify with the anger, you do not lose yourself in it, you just allow the anger to be what it is. This is a state of detachment, but a

detachment that takes great strength, because everything you have learned seduces you into being drawn into your moods, inside the emotion of anger or fear. And to make it more complicated, you also get drawn into judgment about that anger or fear.

So you are being drawn in two ways and pulled away from consciousness, the exit I talked about in the beginning: the exit that is the road to inner peace. Your usual ways of dealing with emotions draw you away from that center point, as it were, away from that consciousness, and yet this is the only way out.

Only by silently observing the full extent of the emotion, you do not become unconscious, you remain entirely present. You do not let yourself be drawn in - neither by the emotion, nor by the judgment about the emotion. You look at it in full consciousness and with a feeling of softness: "this is the way it is in me".

"I see anger arise in me; I feel it course through my body". "My stomach reacts, or my heart; my thoughts are racing to justify reasons for my emotion". "My thoughts tell me I am right and not the other person." All this you can see happen as you observe yourself, but you do not go along with it. You do not drown in it; you do not go under.

That is consciousness - this is clarity of mind. And in this way you bring to rest the demons in your life: the fear, the anger, the mistrust. You give them strength when you identify with them, or if you fight them with judgement - either way, you nurture them.

The only way to transcend them is to rise above them, as it were, with your consciousness - not to fight them, but simply to let them be.

What then happens to you? Consciousness is not something static; things do not remain as they are. You will notice that if you do not nourish the energy of the emotion or of your judgment about it, they will gradually dissipate. In other words, your equilibrium becomes stronger; your basic feeling becomes more one of peace and joy.

Because if there is no longer a battle in your heart and in your soul, the joy comes bubbling upward. You see life with a milder eye. You see the movement of emotions in your body and you observe them. You also

observe the thoughts that start to race through your head, with a look that is soft and mild. Know that the ability to observe, and to not be swallowed up, is something very powerful and strong. This is what it is all about: this is the exit!

I want to ask you now, in this moment, to experience the power of your own consciousness - the pure being - and the liberation by way of it that allows you to feel there is nothing you need to change in yourself. Feel the tranquility and the clarity of this consciousness: that is who you really are.

Put away the false judgments. Let the emotions flow and do not suppress them - they are part of you and some of them have a message. Ask yourself if you have an emotion that you fear, one that is bothering you, one you fight? Maybe one that has become taboo for you? Allow it now to come forward in the form of a child or an animal - to present itself; to show itself. That child might express itself completely, or it might even misbehave.

Whatever happens, it must be allowed to do everything it wants to do, and to tell you what it feels. You are the awareness that looks and says, "Yes, I want to see you; I want to hear your story, express it". "Tell me your story, because it is your truth; it might not be the Truth, but I want to hear your story."

Experience your emotions that way and do not condemn them. Let them come to speak with you. Treat them with the mildness of a wise old person, and observe what that child or animal brings.

There is often hidden in a negative emotion a pure life force that wants to emerge, one that has been choked to death by all the prejudices of judgement. Let the child or animal come skipping toward you. Maybe it changes its appearance now - receive it with loving openness.

Awareness transforms - it is the major instrument for change, yet at the same time, it wants to change nothing. Awareness says, "Yes - yes to what is!" It is receptive and accepting of all that is there, and this changes everything, because it sets you free.

## **Are You Listening?**

You are now free - no longer at the mercy of your emotions or your judgment of them. By letting them be, they lose their control over you. Of course, it still happens occasionally that you are overcome by your emotions and your prejudice - this is to be human.

Try not to get stuck there and do not punish yourself for it: “gosh, I have not attained Clear Consciousness - I must be doing something wrong.” If you do this, you start the ball of judgement rolling again.

You can always return to the exit, back to the peace, by not fighting with yourself. Observe what is there, and make no mistake: not to be drawn in is a great strength. That is the power of true spirituality. True spirituality is not morality - it is a way of being.

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## OK, I Feel Upset. ... Oh, Great!



Reposted from Sept. 18, 2010

by Steve Beckow

Yes, I enjoyed *Eat, Pray, Love* very, very much. No, I don't want to discuss it. I'm right in the middle of an upset and was for most of the movie.

It's wonderful to be right in the middle of an upset.

What's wonderful about it? Well, as I've said before, I can't handle a vasana unless I feel it in the moment. And I usually only feel it in the middle of an upset.

("Vasana" is a Vedantic term for a persistent reaction pattern triggered by a current upset which resembles one from the past.)

I cannot intellectualize an upset. I cannot think of an upset and flatten the vasana underneath it unless I actually do feel the upset in its full glory.

So I do feel upset, which means I have the opportunity to flatten a vasana.

Notice that we can take the attitude of welcoming an upset for exactly this reason: it's THE time to flatten the vasana at its base. Welcome the unwanted guest.

I'm not going to rush through handling this upset because it's too valuable a circumstance. I get to deal with the vasana, I get to go over the upset, I get to describe the stages of release. Much too valuable to rush.

Given that we know that the most demanding circumstances we'll probably face in our lives are just ahead of us - disclosure, first contact, moving from duality to unity, and Ascension - knowing how to flatten a vasana is absolutely, in my view, bootcamp training.

Once in my life, I've had my hair stand on end and I know that being in the middle of tremendous fright is no time to begin learning something. So let me practice on a garden-variety upset instead and be prepared for the really mind-bending situations I may face in the future.

First let me describe the upset and then walk through the steps I recorded earlier (1) for managing it.

Let me take an upset that is currently happening that arose in the midst of the movie. The upset appears to be related to the fact that I'm separating from something, which is as yet poorly defined or understood, and feelings are arising in me over the process. In the movie, Julia Roberts was separating from her boyfriend and it was at that moment that I got upset.

Let's walk through the steps involved in the process I call "be with and observe."

- Stand in the face of it, without reacting.

Ok, so the first thing is to stop whatever else I was doing and switch into "being and observation" mode. So I was moaning and griping to myself

until I realized I was gripped by a vasana. The moment I realized it, I began to be with it and observe it.

- Observe what is happening to you internally.

I noticed I felt disgruntled, exposed, vulnerable. I notice I cannot be with these feelings very well. I want to DOOOOO something. I don't like these sensations.

- Ask yourself precisely when the upset started.

I'm aware of precisely when the upset started. It started when Julia Roberts in the movie hauled out her laptop and began to write an email to the boyfriend she recently separated from. Now the upset can, many times, lift from seeing the precise moment when it started. Mine hasn't, so I'll continue.

- Try to put a name to it - dismay, horror, indignation?

Annoyance is a good word. Gripeyness. Irritability - yes, that's the best word yet. I think irritability best expresses it. At this point too, the upset could lift but it hasn't for me. However I know it happened when Julia started plunking away on her computer and that I feel irritable. Next step.

- Ask yourself what earlier, similar incident is in play here? Take the first thought you get.

I ask my mind to send me a thought, image, or word that will identify for me the earlier, similar incident and I take the first thing I get.

Believe it or not, the earlier, similar incident that arises for me is related to my separation from my first wife, many, many years ago, which eventually led to divorce (she died some years ago so I don't think mentioning it will cause any harm). That was the first thought I got - or rather picture, because I saw myself sitting on the couch in our old home in Ottawa, Ontario.

But so far I see no particular incident. And then it flashes on my mind. I'm talking to my best friend, Don, who has flown in from Vancouver and was staying with us.

I have no idea at this moment how seeing Don relates to watching Julia Roberts writing an email. The only clue is the breakdown of a marriage. I won't even attempt to "think" about it. I'll just let it be. This is not an intellectual process.

- Try it on for size.

Ok, I'll ease myself back into the experience of seeing Don as my marriage collapses.

Since I saw myself in the living room of my Ottawa home, I'll go there in my mind. I see myself talking to Don. He's asking me some pretty intimate questions about my marriage. What I didn't know at that time was that he was also sleeping with my wife. Oh, how foolish - and irritable - I felt afterwards when I found out. So irritability is the connecting link and brought that picture up.

[In his comment, John raises a good point here: Did I feel betrayed? No, this was the era of free love in the early 1970s and my first wife was at liberty to sleep with whomever she wanted. It was the fact that my best friend had not told me he was relating to her before asking me such intimate questions that irritated me.]

- Observe whether entertaining it as the cause of your upset brings release.

OK, some of the irritability left so by trying the situation with Don on for size I discovered that it did account for some of my irritation But I still feel upset.

- If it does, enjoy the release. If it does not, try again.

Yet it does not fully release me so let me try again. Let me see if there is a second upset that sits like a layer under the first.

So I ask my mind again to shoot up a picture of another earlier, similar incident.

For some reason I flash upon myself giving a radio talk show when I was seventeen years old on some international incident like the Cuban missile crisis. I was a member of the International Affairs Club at my high school and the teacher had arranged a radio show for us.

Somehow doing this - commenting on international affairs - fit for me. Talking on the radio was as if I had come home in some way. I had found what would become for me an identity. But in the last analysis I did not go ahead with my radio career in those days and by not doing so I collapsed an identity.



What was the identity I was turning my back on now? Well, I was at that very moment deleting a folder on my email called "Alt Press." It contained alternative news stories on current events. I had decided that there were just too few news stories being published that related to the 2012 scenario and so I was deleting that folder.

My turning my back on "international affairs" now was like my turning my back on it many years ago. This incident was like that earlier-similar incident in being about closing down an identity. And notice how the two sources of upset - the talk with Don and turning my back on international affairs - both involved the collapsing of an identity.

So what was causing a further upset in me was an action I was taking that looked like collapsing an identity. I'm facing right now a rehearsal of the collapse of an identity years ago. Yes, I feel increased release. Yes, this is definitely what's happening. The truth has set me free from both upsets.

- Keep going until all tension is gone.

I can stop now because I'm restored to a sense of being the container in which the upset is happening, rather than the upset itself. I could say that I'm restored to being the context for the upset rather than the contents of the upset. The upset is draining away and I'm "restored to Self."

So this is the "be with and observe" process that I'm recommending others take on to give us a means of handling being reactivated by seeing a strange galactic or being asked to board a space ship.

Surrender to the upset, feel it, name the feeling, allow the mind to toss up the "earlier similar," try it on for size, and watch the upset drain away. If you can't do these things because the galactic is extending his hand, then just be with the situation. That alone will have the upset pass faster than reacting to it.

The alternative is to be reactivated, draw back in alarm, feel flustered, bow out of the situation, etc.

Now to return to the situation which I now see much more clearly

First, Julia Roberts confirming the collapse of her relationship was like speaking to Don at the time of my own first relationship collapse.

Second, deleting a file of international news articles on my computer at the present day resembled walking away from my high-school international affairs role. I was collapsing an identity. Both incidents were upset triggers. And neither incident was related to what was happening in the present, except very tangentially.

OOOO-kay. Now I feel fine again. Restored to feelings of bliss and joy. These two upsets were an interruption in well-being. I could have

multiplied them and sent them back down into memory to rear their ugly heads again some time in the future.

But instead I've "experienced them through." I may have flattened the vasanas the upsets gave rise to or I may have to experience the upsets again some time in the future. If the latter, it will be far easier the second time. They will have lost some of their power over me

This is the process I'm recommending to you as well to flatten the vasanas that are the chief obstacle to stepping into fearful situations, becoming permanently enlightened, and so many other circumstances, many of which we'll encounter in the months and years ahead.

Please don't think I'm somehow an "expert" in handling upsets. They're as difficult and unpleasant for me as they are for you. I just know a few details about how to handle them. But they still trip me up and I look stupid in the middle of them and fumbling when handling them.

Nonetheless, a vasana that is flattened is a vasana that Sri Ramana calls "destroyed." You can't "destroy" a vasana by confronting it head on. (Well, some people can, but I can't.) The best way to "destroy" it is to let it be, be with it and observe it, as I've just described here.

### **Footnote**

(1) "I Know I came Here to Communicate This" at <http://goldenageofgaia.com/ascension/preparing-for-ascension/i-know-i-came-here-to-communicate-this/>

## Being a Second Self to Another



*It's the vasana speaking*

When I look at a topic, it's no surprise that I get email on that subject.

So when I source a vasana publicly, I often find myself discussing vasanas with other people either via email or Skype. And, aside from all the benefits that result from that, I learn additional things about the ways in which our characters are formed.

These matters could be aired if we could find someone who'd allow us the listening time that we so badly need when we're trapped in an upset. But very few people in our society have as yet cottoned to the importance and value of committed listening, much to my sadness.

However, if one can find a good listener, then one gets to march back through time and see how and why our characters were put together the way they are. The path we see is not necessarily a straight line. It has its detours and byways, but it's nevertheless the path that we followed.

It was laid down in the face of trying, disappointing, and/or threatening circumstances, which induced us to reach conclusions about ourselves, others, life, etc. Once having concluded what we did, we then made decisions about how we'd act in the future. This is the point at which the twig is bent and the tree inclined.

Worse, if we went through numerous repeats of the upsetting circumstances, we can reinforce these conclusions and decisions so often that we become what Werner Erhard called "a guy in a diner" - a windbag, a corralized and fossilized type of character, endlessly sitting in a rocking chair, repeating platitudes.

People let us down in threatening circumstances, people failed to deliver on their promises to us, parents refused to play their role, people repeatedly cheated us or cheated on us.

The various strong emotions we felt can show up in the etheric realm as the seeds of medical conditions and disorders. But we, looking from the vantage point of the present, haven't been able to see why we are where we are or do what we do.

But when the whole history of events and the litany of let-downs and upsets is known, we see the map of the territory. We see how we got from there to here.

Most people, when they face someone in a vasana, get mad, get insulted, act coldly, or say something confronting. Very few ignore the emotion and just get what the upset person is saying.

Fewer still invite the upset person to sit down and talk about it or ask questions and then sit for an hour or even two hours to hear the answers. Even those people who listen for a while can get bored and make remarks designed to close the conversation down. Others lapse into advice.

If they did, they'd allow that person to see the journey they took into further and further complication and disturbance, until, in many cases, it surfaced as diseases and disorders.

In my estimation, the fifty-minute hour - and if there are any psychiatrists and psychotherapists reading this, perhaps hear me, if you

would; I mean no disrespect - seldom works. It's too short a time. It's eaten up by opening shares, arrangements, payment, etc. People need open-ended time if they're really going to get into the heart of the matter.

And people may take a while to get into the heart of the matter. I've listened for hours to people in upsets.

When they're into the discussion, they usually become committed to the exploration and the last thing they want to hear is "Time's up! See you next week!" Ouch! That in itself often shows up like a perpetration.

Moreover, many professionals are oriented towards offering solutions, sometimes unwanted, instead of just getting what the patient or client wants to say. In some cases, they may be geared towards figuring out what medications to prescribe and their line of questioning may be oriented towards that rather than being open to what the patient or client wants to say in an agenda-less environment.

If we can just give people the time they need and listen - yes, we may need to make a comment now and then to clarify or to show that we have our ante in the game or even to remind the speaker audibly that someone is there and following them - then people have the one resource they need to really get at what's troubling them.

They have the opportunity and help to lay everything out on the table and see the connections, the progressive development of the difficulty, whether emotional or physical, and how we ended up where we are. Almost always, they arrive at an "Aha!" that clarifies the matter and sets them free of it. (It may take repeated cuts to do so.)

Listening is not simply aiming your ear in the direction of the speaker and ingesting words which you later dump from your mind, the quicker the better. Listening is recreating in your mental and emotional field the experiences that the speaker is describing, being a second Self, going through what they're going through, if only partially.

It isn't taking matters on so deeply that you develop symptoms! But it is tasting the experience, getting the feel of it, and seeing how you'd feel if that happened to you. And seeing where those experiences might lead.

It's more intimate than the listening most people do but not dysfunctional in that we take on the condition.

Our society caters to our needs and pleasures. It produces food, clothing, etc. It offers vacations, thrills, etc.

But it doesn't seem to cater as much or as well to the really basic requirements we have to be emotionally and spiritually well. Or if it does, it doesn't allow such an expense to end up being paid for by medicare or tax money. And many people therefore can't afford what's available.

I hope that someday professional listeners get paid under medicare or funded as education is. But right now listening is not accepted as a therapy. (And I know some people will respond that "psychotherapy is paid listening." See above on that.)

Finally, I can think of no exercise that leads to love and unitive consciousness more, better or easier than listening. Being a second Self for another allows us to share their lives and to understand deeply how it is they got where they are. I feel bonded with those I listen to. I get to know them better than their own relatives may. It's therefore, in my opinion, an honor and a privilege to give someone the gift of listening. I frankly see it is tantamount to a sacrament in service of the Mother.

# Neither a Jukebox nor a Living Fossil



*A jukebox*

The Divine Director said through Tazjima the other day:

"Even acts that appear to contradict one's immediate understanding of self can be turned around and presented as a lesson for others to absorb and benefit from as an example of being true to self and to the greater Self, the collective of humanity." (1)

That certainly makes sense to me and it's in that spirit that I discuss my own traps and vasanas, pratfalls and realizations.

One occurred the other day. I observed myself having a reaction to a situation. I was giving feedback but the feedback I was giving was stronger than was probably appropriate. And I wondered where that was coming from. I looked and saw a vasana underneath it. A vasana is an archaic behavior pattern born out of reaction to ancient trauma.

In this case, I saw myself as a young child, the runt of the litter, trying to get a word in edgewise in a conversation between my father, mother and older brother. I was looking up at all the older folks, utterly unable to have my own point of view be registered in the group. And I reached the conclusion that nobody listens to me.

Having reached that conclusion, I must have decided to make sure I said things in a way that was listened to. So I developed habits like repeating myself, saying things with enough bite that they got attention, becoming a stick in the mud that had to be listened to if the caravan was to proceed, etc.

So just to repeat myself (not wanting to depart from pattern): I reached a conclusion, made a decision on the basis of it, and developed patterns of behavior that became part of my constructed self, persona, or identity.

Pretty common stuff so far. But over the years this pattern becomes extended, exacerbated, stretched, etc. With continuous repetition, outside the field of awareness, I become ever more acerbic in my comments, forceful in my presentation, and so on. My behavior and personality become skewed: as the twig is bent, the tree inclines.

The tendency of vasanas to become more and more objectionable over time is why I say that, if we don't source or complete them, we end up in a rocking chair, nattering to ourselves, a living fossil.

We end up talking to ourselves because no one wants to be around us or listen to us (in my case, my vasana of concluding that I was not listened to would become a self-fulfilling prophecy). We become fossilized because we've repeated the vasana so many times and added so many layers to it that it becomes difficult to break free.

Werner Erhard used to call vasanas "records" and a person with many records was a "jukebox." So we become a jukebox after a while, endlessly playing our top ten tunes.

But at least becoming aware of the vasana means we can't run it now without being aware of it. And the centipede that becomes aware of its hundred legs ... well, you know what happens to it. Nothing left for it to do when it piles up into a little ball than become a butterfly.

So, even if we haven't learned to source a vasana, we can still at least raise it to awareness. I personally am fascinated with the way a human being works. I can observe my own folly for hours and get a rousing laugh out of the way I be.

Nonetheless, we have the added payoff this time around in that an investment in awareness pays off more than perhaps any other investment I can think of. And smooths the way for all that comes next.

### **Footnotes**

(1) "The Great Divine Director: Be True to One's Self," channeled through Tazjima, 1 June, 2013 at <http://bluedragonjournal.com>.

# The Binds That Tie Us



*I became the policeman of the world*

As Kathleen points out, there are ties that bind, but there are also binds that tie. Our core issues are binds that tie us in knots.

They're binds in the sense that we find ourselves propelled in directions that once may have been useful but now, much later in life, are no longer so.

We find ourselves in a bind, feeling loyal to these dyed-in-the-wool ways of being, which we sense more and more no longer serve us.

I had a personal reading yesterday with AAM in which a team member asked me to ask if Feb. 10 was an unusual day. She found herself in crisis on that day.

Archangel Michael responded that it was a "null day" and many people would have found themselves in crisis as their core issues rose to the surface. I think it's a prelude to the tsunami of love.

All of mine rose to the surface on the day as well and I'm still dealing with what I learned. Let me elaborate.

There are various views on core issues. Some people think we have only one, or that there is one core issue that we agreed to take on for the collective eons ago, or that one core issue underlies all others and is the "head vampire."

I saw the core issue that I agreed to take on eons ago, and I saw several others as well, one of which has stubbornly resisted processing.

So I guess I fall into the camp that says we can have many core issues. The human mind is ingenious and does not respect limits so why could we not have many?

In working through each of these core issues with the help of a competent friend, I saw both the issue and the flip side.

Linda Dillon has called core issues "motivators" because they send us in certain directions. They also have a "flip side." That is, we find ourselves in an issue relative to ourselves, but it propels us to develop certain qualities relative to others.

Apparently I took on eons ago the core issue I call "unforgiveable." I walk around with a residual feeling playing at a low level that I am somehow unforgiveable.

I have no recollection of anything that I've done in this lifetime that would give rise to it and I have "sourced" it for some time now, without success.

I've been told that this is an issue I took on in the distant past to source for the collective.

The flip side is that, apparently, I've developed what Buddhists would call a paramit, virtue or quality of generosity. I can't actually say I've developed a paramit of forgiveness. I was actually known as a person with a long memory rather than a short one in that area.

But nonetheless the development of generosity on the flip side of or out of response to this vague, low-level feeling of guilt and shame that comes with feeling unforgivable is a blessing.

I was able to source or complete the core issue of unforgiveability.

But more and more issues presented themselves in the course of this “null day” and the day that followed.

You already know about the issue “Nobody listens to me,” which arose from being the runt of the litter whom no one paid much attention to. That one yielded to processing.

The angry person who had watched domestic violence and been the victim of it I mentioned yesterday too. Let me come back to that because that has not yielded to processing and I’ll tell you why.

The flip side of that one was I became the world’s policeman - defending anyone who was being attacked by another, but especially women and becoming fully fight-ready when I perceived myself under attack.

Another core issue I had identified months ago: “I don’t need anybody.” Out of that one I became a loner.

The flip side was that I’m not a needy person. If a person is busy, I have no problem letting go of a request for contact, etc. I can always accommodate people needing time or space to themselves so I can be a good, non-demanding friend to have around.

Another is “I won’t keep the family secrets (lies).” My family had really bad arguments and then put on a false front that we were one happy family (we were not). I found that so repulsive that I promised myself I would not keep secrets.

The flip side was that I became transparent and refused to lie about how things were. I was able to process that one as well, while still keeping the gains made on the flip side.

Another one was that my Dad, colorfully, used to call me a “lazy, no-good, good-for nothing.” The flip side was that I became the world’s most prolific producer, a workaholic, a person for whom his output defined who he was (as you can see in the library attached to this site).

Steve, when are you going to stop?

So our core issues are a negative attribution made of us which we compensate for by developing qualities that are usually the opposite or the flip side of the negative attribution.

Both the negative attribution and the positive flip side shape our characters. Now we need to let go of the negative attribution, which we've internalized. But we don't need to let go of the paramit or virtue that we've developed.

In fact the value of having chosen before life to place ourselves in a situation where this negative attribution would occur is that we motivated ourselves to develop this paramit or virtue and to put it into practice.

So now to the last core issue I saw on this chaotic "null day." I sum it up as "Don't mess with me."

I was the youngest of the family and got kicked around a lot. I was a bright young student with an October birthday so I was usually the youngest in my grade ... and got kicked around a lot.

My Dad made me a target, he told me in later life, because I looked like my Mom and so I became the stand-in for her. Sort of like kicking the dog. Or he might take something from her, but not from me.

Any way you look at it, I agreed to subject myself to a fair amount of violence.

At the same time my Mom also sustained a fair amount of violence and I promised to help her one day.

So this desire to protect myself, and what later became "women" rather than my Mom (who by that time had taken leave of the planet) became mish-moshed together, which is one reason why I have difficulty sourcing it.

When I try to let go of the anger that arises in me, I come up against the fact that my being the policeman of the planet shows up like a sacred vow I made to my Mother at age ... whatever. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Last point: Certain circumstances can complicate the processing of a core issue. In my case I was dissociated from age 7 to age 42 because my Dad shouted at me from such close range that I shattered as a personality at age 7. I became the Humpty Dumpty man.



*I became the Humpty Dumpty man*

There were two "me's" who didn't know each other existed. They met when I was 42 and a friend said that I had the profile of an abused child.

The two me's raced to the forefront at the same time to say "yes" and metaphorically looked at each other and said "Who are you?"

I erupted in a volcano of anger at that moment. It took years to complete the process of putting Humpty Dumpty back together again.

The upshot was that there was no one person who would take responsibility for me and my core issues. Moreover there was not a stable

personality base, no one strong enough to take the reins and see to what I needed to do.

But there again, the flip side was that I went into one growth course or workshop after another and learned the skills of the growth movement. The writing I do today derives from all I learned there.

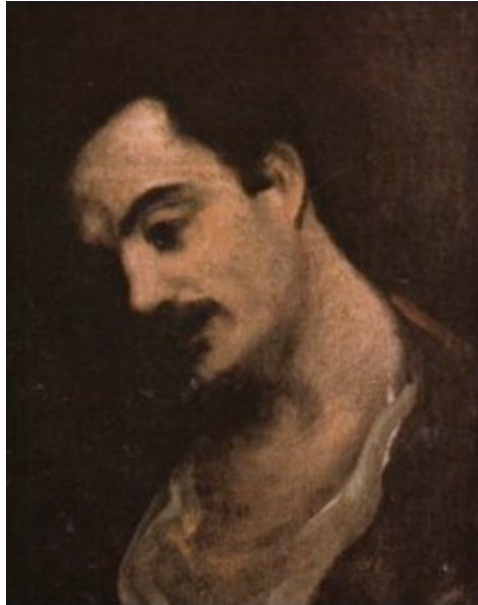
The angry edge I had lies below so much that is “everyday” today. I was talking to my bank manager yesterday and heard it at a very deep level. And I believe he recognized it too and shied away from me.

It colours so much about me. And it has long, long ago outlived whatever usefulness and survival value it may have had.

So I plan to do a kind of sacred ritual and ask my mother formally to release me from my vow to continue protecting her and hope that removes the lynchpin that keeps me being policeman to the world.

I don't feel totally complete and won't until I source the residual anger I feel that still colors my self-presentation. But I do feel years younger from having sourced the other core issues.

## Entertaining the Counterintuitive



Kahlil Gibran could have been speaking of these times when he said:

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.  
He threshes you to make you naked.  
He sifts you to free you from your husks.  
He grinds you to whiteness.  
He kneads you until you are pliant;  
And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become  
sacred bread for God's sacred feast. (1)

One minute we're high as can be and the next minute we're stretched beyond belief. One minute we're full of energy and the next minute we can't stand on our feet. We're being kneaded like dough, or so it seems.

**What's the purpose of it?**

Well, I don't know the divine purpose of it, but I certainly can guess at some of the psychological purposes.

I've said on other occasions that our vasanas (reaction patterns) make up our constructed self. But the precipitate of our vasanas is what Wilhelm Reich called "character armor" and Eckhart Tolle called "the pain body." (2) We store our upsets in the body as bands of muscular tension (character armoring) and we also store pain in our etheric bodies. The aggregate consciousness of pain is the "pain body."

Holding the memories of our pain has several effects. Awareness varies, I believe, inversely with the level of tension in the body. The tension we feel from the memory of pain lowers our awareness.

Crying and laughing both release tension, as do bioenergetics, rebirthing, Rolfing, yoga, stretching, and many other practices. The tension that these practices release is often the really solidly-packed-in tension.

Relaxation also releases stress, which is one of the causes of tension, along with our belief systems or vasanas. Music, walks in nature, a hot drink, massage and other practices such as these relax us, lower stress levels, and heighten awareness.

Love, such as we've been feeling this past week as the Mother pours her clarity energy out to us, rids us of stress as well, but exposes the holding patterns in the body and therefore can raise vasanas to the surface in the same way that lowering the water in a river exposes rocks.

The raising of vasanas to the surface is not a sign of defeat. I think you've heard me say often: Oh, boy, here comes a vasana. Whoopee! I get a chance to complete it!

You cannot complete a vasana unless it's up so, when one is up, that's our big chance. Not to project it onto someone else, but to experience it through to completion, at which point it lifts.

Everyone has vasanas, even supposedly enlightened masters. Our vasanas aren't burned to a crisp until after sahaja samadhi, which lies perhaps a year out in front of us. We have a ways to go and you can rely on the energies to pull us like taffee until the preponderant part of our vasanas are gone. Whatever is left will be forgiven us by the Law of Grace. (3)

## What to do?

There are many approaches to ridding ourselves of vasanas, or what Eckhart calls "strong emotional reactions." A whole portion of this blog is dedicated to exploring those paths. (4) But the very best way I know to complete a vasana is to paint it with awareness - what Eckhart calls "presence."

Remain aware of the vasana as it arises. Follow your breath if you need something to help you stay present (remain as presence) as the vasana moves through you. As I said the other day, awareness (or presence) is decidedly not neutral. Awareness is a divine solvent. Knots in consciousness cannot persist through simple, bare awareness.

Project them onto others and they grow. Resist them and they persist. But remain in bare awareness of them and they cannot remain. This too will pass and it does - most readily - in the face of bare awareness.

So much of what we need to do in the spiritual realm is counterintuitive. Our first impulse is to DO something. We push and lift and strain ourselves to accomplish useful work.

But the Divine does not move. The Divine is still. And the Divine is ultimate awareness. If we want to become men and women who move without moving, do without doing, then we need to rest in awareness.

We need to understand and accept that what applies in the Third-Dimensional world of matter is not ultimate and that things like awareness are much more powerful than what we think of as action.

Remember how the Divine Mother said in her interview on An Hour with an Angel that we could be a wayshower without leaving our bedroom? (5) Well, yes, because lightwork does not have to be active. We also serve who only stand and watch.

So whether we're in a chaotic node or bathed in delicious energies, we need to entertain the counterintuitive spiritual disciplines and cultivate such things as standing still, resting in simple awareness, accepting the tumultuous and just observing it. We need to "be with" our upsets and listen to what our body tells us. And, above all, we need to relax and

allow the knots in consciousness to lift from the solvent of bare awareness.

## Footnotes

(1) Excerpts from The Prophet by Khalil Gibran at [http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/poetry\\_gibran.htm](http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/poetry_gibran.htm).

(2) Wilhelm Reich, Character Analysis, at [http://wilhelmreichtrust.org/character\\_analysis.pdf](http://wilhelmreichtrust.org/character_analysis.pdf). Eckhart Tolle, "Living in Presence With Your Emotional Pain" at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eckhart-tolle/living-in-presence-with-y b 753114.html>.

(3) "With the end times rapidly drawing so near, may souls have elected to take on all remaining karmic experiences. For many it is therefore a hectic time, particularly at a personal level. When you ascend karma will have been cleared by you or 'written off' through the Law of Grace." (SaLuSa, Aug. 3, 2011 at [http://www.treeofthegoldenlight.com/First\\_Contact/Channeled\\_Messages\\_by\\_Mike\\_Quinsey.htm](http://www.treeofthegoldenlight.com/First_Contact/Channeled_Messages_by_Mike_Quinsey.htm).)

(4) "On Processing Vasanas" at <http://goldenageofgaia.com/on-processing-vasanas/>.

(5) "You can be a way-shower in your bedroom." ("The Divine Mother: The Role of Clarity" at <http://goldenageofgaia.com/spiritual-essays/the-nature-of-the-divine-mother/the-divine-mother-the-role-of-clarity/>.)

## Experiencing, Re-Experiencing - It Feels the Same!

Blossom had a really interesting and important discussion with her sources recently and I feel a great need to comment because more and more of us will be experiencing the same thing and experiencing it more often as we climb Jacob's Ladder to the Fifth Dimension in the weeks and months ahead.



This not a reposting of her message, but I need to quote the part important to this discussion. Blossom said:

Blossom: Good morning! I could do with some reassurance to be honest. Is it just me? I TRULY didn't realise I had so little patience or tolerance. Nothing seems to be changing ... it seems to be getting worse and it doesn't feel good! What's going on? Can you tell us in a little more detail than our last communication?

Galactic Federation of Light: Warmest greetings to all. You are FEELING uncomfortable with your discomfort are you not? Yet it is to be recognised that although it may be seemingly that one is out

of sorts ... one is actually moving deeper into the correctness of who they TRULY are.

So ... it doesn't really FEEL like this is anger from old patterns that needs to come out ... it FEELS different ... would I say 'fresh anger'? How stupid does that sound?  
And yet we would say it is not anger at all.

Well my ranting and raving to an empty room or car certainly FEELS like anger ... definitely lack of tolerance. It's like I hardly recognise myself ... or certainly not this part of me.

Let us unfold these twists and turns in a manner that is suited to your requirements. Firstly ... that which you deem as anger is a dissipation of energies that conflict with the way you TRULY are.  
(1)

What's the perspective in which what both Blossom and her sources say are correct? Blossom feels fresh anger and the GF sources say she is actually moving deeper into who she really is.

Here's the missing piece of the puzzle.

Whether we're angry or releasing anger by completing a vasana, we feel the same: angry. (A vasana is a pattern of resistance anchored in an earlier traumatic incident.)

In the first instance, we're creating more anger and storing it away in our memories and in our bodies as muscular tension. In the second case, we're re-experiencing anger as it goes through us, preparatory to being released.

But the experience in both cases is the same.

The difference is that in the first instance we're taking in anger and in the second we're releasing it. But to release it we must re-experience it. And whether we experience it or re-experience it, it feels the same. We still feel angry.

So perhaps the counsel here is not to judge progress on the way you feel. When you experience anger, you're going to feel awful. But when you re-experience, complete and release a vasana, you're going to feel awful too. I guarantee it. But you'll feel a great deal better after the vasana is released.

I spoke to one friend yesterday who released a huge vasana and she said she felt younger, freer, more buoyant. Yes, one does after a vasana is released.

But while it's going through you and out the door, you may feel anything but younger, freer and more buoyant. You may feel miserable.

If it doesn't kill you, it'll make you stronger. And lighter and happier.

So please don't be fooled by the way you feel in the process of releasing your old baggage. That's the price to be paid for being free of it.

### **Footnotes**

(1) "Blossom Goodchild: February 13, 2013," at <http://goldenageofgaia.com/2013/02/blossom-goodchild-february-13-2013/>

# From Reaction to Completion



People are discussing going through many emotional states right now, whose turmoil is added to by spiritual experiences that are happening. It may be good to have a discussion about the situation we're facing and useful ways of responding.

## 1. Transformational Moments and Their Aftermath

Some people are discussing breaking through to a place of expanded consciousness which they have for a while and which then disappears. When it disappears, people are saying they are disappointed; they feel let down. They wonder what the value of the spiritual struggle is.

Transformational moments do have the characteristic of opening and closing. The interval between the two may be days in length or minutes or hours. But they do close down and leave us more or less in the same place where we started. The fact that we find ourselves having "lost" the experience or back at the same place is not a judgment on us. It isn't a sign that we screwed up. It doesn't say that we are foolish, incapable or undeserving.

Transformational moments of and by themselves do not have the power to produce lasting consequences. Think of them like a vacation abroad - a time-out which is lovely while it's happening but whose benefits may

disappear soon after we return to work. They remind us of how life can be but they themselves usually do not alter life permanently.

## **2. Spiritual Awakenings and Their Aftermath**

Spiritual awakenings can bring new capabilities online but we again expect that they will be unalloyed in their effects whereas in fact they can often bring with them much need for reorganization or they can stir up negative memories and feelings. These must be resolved before we find ourselves in a place that we feel happy overall with. So, while transformational moments are disappointing because they leave, spiritual awakenings can be confusing because they bring with them some uncomfortable moments.

## **3. Unresolved Issues Coming to the Fore**

As if this wasn't enough, the rising energies are bringing all sorts of unresolved issues to the fore, both in us and in those around us. In some cases I know mammoth unresolved behavior patterns are being challenged by unforeseen and troublesome events. Bosses are being bullyish. Financial situations are exploding. We're being caught in severe weather. Relatives appear to be going mad or choosing to remain asleep.

Some people have had transformational moments or spiritual awakenings, and encouraged by them, have once again tried to tackle recalcitrant friends and relatives, only to be met by resistance, in the face of which they have lost their transformational moment or have wondered what good their spiritual awakening was.

Think of it as a large riverboat having gone through the channel and having raised all the mud from the river below. The river is cloudy with silt and the fish are thrown into confusion. That is about how the situation seems.

### **How to Proceed?**

What is central to all of what is happening now is what we need to do with ourselves. Whether a transformational moment disappeared or a spiritual awakening stirred things up or unresolved issues have just

surfaced in the face of the rising energies, the need of the moment is the same.

These situations, all of them, call for the same response from us.

We are used to being riled by our upsets and projecting our wrath on others. We are used to feeling self-righteous about behaving in this manner. But what we don't realize is that this way of living life simply adds to the layers and layers of reactivity our personality is composed of and makes us ever more petrified. We now have to totally change the way we live life and it becomes more important to do this as each day passes.

### **To what way do we need to change?**

Instead of projecting our upsets outwards or for that matter instead of "introjecting" them inwards and blaming ourselves rather than others, we need now to follow a two-step way of life, just as we walk on two legs or breathe in and breathe out.

The two steps are experiencing and observing.

### **Experiencing**

We're used to resisting our negative feelings or projecting or introjecting them. But we now must start experiencing them. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say we need to start experiencing them through to completion. So whereas, in the past, we've resisted feeling, say, panicky, or overwhelmed, or fearful, or hateful, or whereas in the past we have attacked others because we think they have "made" us feel those ways, we now need to start experiencing those feeling states, in order to complete the experience of them.

We won't relieve ourselves of unwanted feeling states and conditions unless we experience them through to completion. We've tried resisting them or projecting or introjecting them. That hasn't worked. It has only added to our stress and tension and reduced our awareness or consciousness. We need to go a different route now.

That different route is to breathe, when we feel an unwanted condition, and allow the unwanted condition to play upon us until it completes itself. That is the way to have the condition release its grip on us and finally dissipate and disappear. If we proceed in that way, then rather than adding to our stress, we will be completing the experience of these states and watching them disappear.

### Observing

Just as we never take a step with our right foot without following it with a step with our left foot, or don't take a breath in without following it with a breath out, so experiencing is not the only thing we do. We also must observe.

It's true to say that while we're experiencing we should only experience. But we should also follow it by observing what experiencing raises - just not at one and the same time.

In fact we cannot experience and observe at the same time. One is a subjective state and the other is an objective state. We have to move from one to the other.

We need to experience and then take a moment to observe what experience has brought. So I may breathe into an unwanted condition and feel it and then I may follow that by observing what has occurred and even perhaps naming it: "I feel fearful." "I feel hatred." "I feel anxious." I will name the feeling I feel and watch how it alters.

So long as I'm experiencing something, I don't observe it. I do one or the other but not both at the same time. After I have breathed into the experience of an unwanted condition and filled myself up with it, I may then observe what has happened, and then experience again, and then observe. And by moving in this manner, I work my way through an upset.

### What I Don't Do

Well, unfortunately I do what I shouldn't do all too often. But just pretend for a moment that I actually practice what I preach or walk the walk as well as talk the talk. Thank you for that. You're most kind.

If I practice what I preach or walk the walk, then, when I feel upset, I don't pick a fight with someone else. I don't blame them for what just happened. I thank my lucky stars that I am upset because now I have the opportunity to complete that upset, which I wouldn't have otherwise, and I set about experiencing that upset and observing what happens.

So I literally walk around all day, breathing in and breathing out, experiencing how I'm feeling and then observing what just happened. I "be with" the feelings and observe. Experience, observe. Experience, observe. I may link these two to my breath and experience on the inbreath and observe on the outbreath. Or I may spend a certain amount of time experiencing and a certain amount of time observing. In this manner, I pass my day, with attentiveness. When I'm not focussed on another, I'm focussed on my internal realm and internal life, wherein is to be found the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **Plugging This Back In**

So now let's plug this back into the scenarios just listed. I have a transformational moment and I lose it. I don't blame others or blame myself. I experience how I feel losing it and observe what happens to that feeling over time. I observe how I feel now having lost it and then I observe again how I feel after having experienced my response to losing it. Then I observe how I feel a few minutes later and watch the rise and fall of my reactions and emotions. Before long I am out of the upset of having lost my transformational moment - or I may be back in the transformational moment! It can happen. Less often than losing it, but it still could happen.

Or I have a spiritual awakening and everything gets stirred up. So then I begin to experience how I feel with everything stirred up. I breathe into the feelings and fill myself up with them. Then I begin to observe them, perhaps naming them, perhaps breathing into them and watching to see what happens to them when I accept them.

I work with the feelings, filling myself up with them and experiencing them and then observing what happens over time. I continue doing this over time and watch the upset rise and fall or the stirred up issues assert and resolve themselves. Nothing lasts (but a very advanced stage of enlightenment). I watch the rise and fall of situations within myself and

my reactions to them continuously. In this way I navigate through the storm of stirred up feelings as a result of my spiritual awakening.

Or the rising energies bring up unresolved issues in me or in those around me. Again, I proceed in the same way - filling myself up with the experience and noticing its rise and fall, what it feels like, what other feelings and issues it's connected to, when it changes, when it returns, where it goes, what it feels like.

We are heading into a time of incredible change soon. Hopefully it will not always be chaotic but at some point will transition into being peaceful, but it'll still be change. I suggest we'll feel happy with ourselves if we master this new way of being with life before the change gets really wild. If we do, we'll be well-positioned to move through constant change, experiencing our reactions and observing how they come and go and where we're at with them at any given moment.

Breathing in and breathing out, walking on the left foot and on the right, being with and observing, experiencing and noticing, feeling and seeing.

This is the way I recommend walking through life, especially when life becomes eventful and constantly changes. Keep the attention on ourselves. Watch how we respond to things. Observe how we're feeling. Experience our feeling states. Remain with what is happening internally until our experience of any one situation is complete and then open to what's next. Rising and falling, going in and coming out, experiencing and observing, experiencing and observing.

# Social Maturity is the New Baseline



I think we as a society are going through one baseline after another of social behavior. A baseline of behavior for me is one or more norms for behavior that society as a whole agrees on or tends towards.

The Arcturians through Sue Lie described one of them:

"The years of 1996 to 2003 were the darkest times since the fall of Atlantis. These times were even darker than your World Wars because these were times when your entire planet was on the edge of complete domination and/or destruction. That reality still exists, but at a much lower frequency." (1)

I personally would have extended that date past 2003 - perhaps to as late as 2010.

And I'd call the baseline of social behavior the Arcturians were pointing at criminality.

Whether we were aware of it or not, as a world society, I think we were being dragged down into criminal and corrupt behavior by our governments and their agencies.

Government and agency involved themselves in false-flag operations, engineered warfare, the rape of nations, the erosion of civil rights, the drug trade, fraudulent financial operations, chemtrails, pandemics, GMOs, weather warfare, etc.

A steady diet of crime dramas on TV persuaded us that life was not safe. So-called action-hero movies inculcated in us an "us against them" mentality. Much flag-waving lent a veneer of patriotism and respectability to this brand of social manipulation.

Our opinion makers and leaders seemed hell bent to have us descend into violent and opportunistic behavior. We've wholly or partly emerged from that chapter in our history. As the energies pull us higher, so our social behavior seems to be evolving upwards.

I think the next baseline came for everyone who accepted that we were in a unique transformational corridor in time. That next baseline was release. All of us who accept the global shift in consciousness have agreed to release the patterns of behavior that haven't worked. We've been in this baseline period of release for several years now, some longer than others. We've let go of much of our negativity, conditioning, and constructed self.

I think the baseline of social behavior towards which we're headed is what I'd call social maturity. I'd rather not define what I mean by that because I think a rich discussion can be had that will be educational for all and I'd rather not slant that discussion right off the starting block.

I can say what I sense about it. I sense that mature social behavior is what's left once we release our negative tendencies and social narcissism. It's implicit in humanity and simply needs the overburden of negativity and irresponsibility removed.

Mature behavior is marked by accountability, harmlessness, forward thinking, and cautiousness. Immature behavior is marked by

unaccountability, potential harmfulness, a lack of foresight and a lack of caution.

A mature social order strikes me in its most general form as things getting better and better rather than getting worse and worse. Social maturity leads to wisdom, love, and harmony. It builds the confidence that allows a society to found workable social institutions that resolve social conflict and ensure the well-being of all a society's citizens.

A society being sent towards its own devolution, as ours was until around, say, three years ago, is a society that cares little for its members apart from looking out for Number One, seeing to me and mine.

Such a society doesn't feel that the commonwealth should pay for its ailing members, that social problems should be addressed by society, or that there should be equality or even freedom except in relation to a person's political and other forms of power.

But a society being guided as ours is towards the divine qualities, socially central of which is compassion, experiences a growing caring for its members. Such a society sees itself as responsible for its ailing members, holds that social problems should be addressed by society, and believes that equality and freedom are independent of a person's political and other forms of power. It sees them as inalienable rights.

Social immaturity seems to suggest the childhood of humanity and social maturity seems to suggest its adulthood. I found myself asking, in relation to social questions that arose for me: What does maturity say? And what the answer to that question was, in any one instance, interested me. I welcome a behavioral baseline of social maturity.

The thought arose in me that social maturity is the minimum level of behavior at the present time that unites us as a civilization headed for Ascension. I have a strong hunch there'll be other stages that become the baseline later on - or the floor of our common behavior. But this is as far as I think I see at the moment.

## **Footnotes**

(1) "The Arcturians - Living Your Highest Point of Perception," by Suzanne Lie, Dec. 31, 2012, at [http://suzanneliephd.blogspot.co.uk/.](http://suzanneliephd.blogspot.co.uk/))

# Appendix 1. On Listening as a Restorative Approach



Steve Beckow: Why don't we discuss listening?

Kay Stone: Okay.

SB: This is just my theory about it. It's not like this is the truth or anything of the sort.

But for me the ideal posture for listening is to be a second self for the other person.

So the idea is not for me to question them. Well I may have some clarifying questions, or may have a shot in the dark from time to time and a moment to share about myself if it's relevant.

But it's certainly not for me to steer them down another road.

If, after five chapter headings, we cut them off by, and intervening and proposing our agenda, then we've interjected ourselves way too early. They'll throw out all kinds of things in the beginning, and all kinds of things will look as if it's "The Thing." And the tendency is to jump on it and say, "Well, let's work on that." No, no, no. We need to give them a good shot at speaking.

Think of it this way, that everything that a person says when they're taking to you in a listening session is a chapter heading. You could unroll this thing that they say and lots would come out of it. They're speaking in chapter headings, so if we hear three chapter headings, and then we cut them off and say, "You're being drawn into somebody else's drama. Let's look at the drama. Let's see. Page 53. Drama."

No, no, no, no. They've got a lot more chapter headings to give you before they're ready to hear anything like advice, and frankly I don't give advice. I never have.

The biggest problem that arises when one person listens to another is the person listening has an ego investment in the outcome. They want to feel that they helped, or they want to feel that they solved the problem, or they want to feel important, or they want to feel useful, and so they're not an open, listening vessel.

They have an agenda, and they're going to probably, and very subtly, work it. But it's actually not subtle. The minute the speaker realizes that they're wanting to have the credit - you know, "Look, I cured this person! I healed this person! I helped this person!" - the speaker may go, "Oh God, this is not going to work; they're not really listening."

So listening is agenda-less. There's nothing in it for me outside of serving the Divine Mother. I'm not going to heal another person. Listening will help another person, yes, but if I come from, "Oh, look at me, what a good boy am I. I'm helping them," then it'll skew the listening session for sure and may even take me out of listening and into directing things to ensure a successful outcome. It'll bias matters, send them in a certain direction, and we don't want to send the other person in a certain direction.

Imagine that they've got a thousand puzzle pieces in their hands. And they've been carrying these pieces around since forever and their friends and family allow them to look at one puzzle piece, and maybe another puzzle piece, at one time but not the whole picture.

Listening allows them to put all the puzzle pieces on the table, and magically they arrange themselves and show them the picture and they say, "Oh my God, I got it! I see the picture!"

That's the function of listening: to allow them to put one piece on the table, another piece, another, another, until finally the picture emerges, and when the picture emerges, they're released from the condition that they're in. It's like, "Oh God, that's what Mother wanted. Now I see it! Ah, why didn't I see it before? But I see it now!"

They're released. As soon as they've gotten release, usually what they want to do is get out the door and go tell their husband, or their wife, or their father, or their mother, "Oh, look what I found." They sometimes forget to say thank you. They'll just whiz out the door. I don't try to keep them. I don't say, "Well let's talk about next time you're coming here."

I don't even have them come a second time. There shouldn't be a next time with listening. We should get to the root of the problem in one session.

Just because they get an 'Aha' once is not the end of it by any means. I went to enlightenment intensives and I got huge 'aha's' on my Dad and the next enlightenment intensive, I'm back there working on my Dad again. But they will over time get it. It will lift over time

It's amazing because when I started out learning how to be a counselor, my predominant idea was that I needed to give advice, but listening is easy because you don't have to give advice. You don't need to solve anybody's problem.

I used to say to people, "Well here's the answer to your problem." Not quite as bald as that, but they didn't give a damn. They just wanted to keep talking. They wanted to be heard. They didn't want to hear my solutions to their problem.

I had to really work at problem-solving therapy, whereas with listening you don't have to work.

So it's effortless. Now, going back to what I was saying earlier: The truth will set them free. That's the maxim that underlies listening. And so this, 'Aha,' this release, means they found the truth. They've been set free from the unwanted feelings they had about the situation by seeing the truth of it.

By the same token, as they're moving along I can say to them after half-an-hour or something, "Are you feeling a little more freed up at all?"

And they might say, "Yea, I feel better." That means we're heading towards the truth. Increasing release means they've come upon some small or preliminary aspects of the truth and we're moving in the right direction.

If they were to say, "No, I don't feel any different." Well, then, maybe what we're talking about is not the truth. We're buying somebody else's story, or we're buying their interpretation, or something, but we're not getting close to the truth of the matter.

So I use release as my compass. Do they look lighter now than they did before? No, they don't. Then I don't think we're headed in the right direction. But again, if you think of this notion of them having three hundred chapter headings and we don't know which is the right one to pull down and expand and read the rest of it, we're just listening to the chapter headings for now.

KS: Okay. So what you pointed out earlier, that if after they've gone through five chapter headings, okay, and they're not feeling any better yet, do you just continue letting them talk?

SB: Yes, they tend to speak in chapter headings. Every sentence that they say in the beginning could probably be rolled right out, and there's a whole story behind it. But for now they're giving you the overview, in one chapter heading after another.

Let me see if I can illustrate that, "Well, my Dad yelled at me when I was seven, and he used to punch me and kick me under the table, and all that stuff, and you never knew when it was coming, but when he hit Mom, that was the end of the road." Each of those three things I just said were chapter headings: I could talk about any one of them for a long time.

KS: Okay.

SB: But notice I as the speaker am still wanting to go forward. I didn't stop and say, "Well, let's look at this thing when he hit my Mom." I didn't do that. I'm continuing to go forward. I

it's obvious that these three things may be the things that I may want to talk about later, but something else needs to come out first. I don't know what it is, but something else. Another type of counsellor might turn to the person and say, "Well, tell me about when you Dad hit your Mom." I would not do that.

That would stop the person's forward motion completely. And counsellors who have a bias against story may interrupt the speaker precisely because their time is limited and they don't want to listen to story. But the speaker usually wants to move along through a bunch of stuff. They haven't come near to what it is they want to talk about after having said those three things.

Mind you, very few people know what to do when someone actually does listen to them. They may be completely unused to being listened to and appear confused. That's alright. Once they see that you actually are listening, they'll begin to unwind or unload.

So counselors who are problem-solving-oriented fail to see that this is not problem-solving. This is creating and providing an open space in which the speaker gets to lay it all out and see the whole picture, and come to a realization about what the heck's going on, what's driving them and has been driving them all their lives.

Sometimes the realization will have no obvious relationship to what was said, and I'll give you an illustration of this. I've been sourcing my anger, completing the vasanas (archaic reaction patterns arising from earlier traumatic incidents) around my anger, for years! Years, and years, and years, and then in Grass Valley, California, after Linda's Lake Tahoe Gathering, I sat bolt upright in bed and I saw the source of my anger.

Up to this time I thought the source of my anger was sure to be related to my Dad, right? And any reasonable person looking at my life would think that it would have to be related to my Dad.

That makes perfect sense. No. What I awoke staring at was a photograph in a coroners's report of my Mother's burned-out body. So this is my Mother after the housefire, right, and it was like, "Oh God, what is this?"

I made a decision after that that I would never let anyone into my life. Not again, not if this is how it ends. So thank you. Not going there again.

So whenever somebody tried to get to know me, or tried to get into my heart, I'd get mad. I'd blow up about something, never knowing why I did this, never at all. In was pushing them away and refusing entry into my heart.

And that was actually the seed of my anger. The reason I'm saying this to you is: Do you think that you or anybody else could have guessed that a photograph of my Mother, seen after the fire, would cause my anger after I've talked about my Father all these years? On the blog and everything?

KS: Well, honestly I have to answer, yes, I do, because I had the same experience, Steve. I thought it was my Father I was angry at all these years too and it was my Mother.

SB: Wow!

KS: And I'll start crying if I talk about it, but yeah, I had that exact same experience. So, yes, I can personally relate to it, but I can see what you're saying that most people wouldn't because I didn't see it, just like you didn't.

SB: Yes, why would a picture of your Mother cause your anger?

Well anyways, after I saw that picture in Grass Valley, my anger disappeared. I was gonna say I haven't been angry since then. I've gotten a little irritated, just a tiny bit, but not angry the way I used to get. That's the brass ring, right? That they have the opportunity to get that "Oh, it was my Mother's photograph!"

I was with Kathleen in a motel room and we were sleeping and I sat bolt upright in bed when I saw that this. Now other people might have said, "That's great, Steve. Now go back to bed," or "It's three o'clock in the

morning for God's sake. Can't you see I need to sleep?" Or "That's what it was. Well, good, dear. I'm glad you got it. Now go back to sleep."

But Kathleen allowed me to talk. She allowed me to get through this experience, to absolutely and completely experience the emotions that came up around seeing my Mother's photograph until it just went, "Ugh" and it was gone.

So she had a listening response whereas others I related to never learned how to listen or didn't want to listen for one reason or another.

There's so much to learn, like how to catch that one sentence that unwinds the whole thing.

My girlfriend from a long time ago said, "I got cold feet in that relationship. I only saw him for three months and then I left. I don't know why I keep leaving relationships." And I said to her "Is that the way things were in Newfoundland where you grew up, that you would go into the water for a short time and get cold feet and run out?" And she said, "Yes." And it was like - gong - she got her paradigm of relationship.

Go into the water for a few minutes, and get cold feet and come out. There are these single sentences, these bell-ringers and deal-breakers that come up and inside our head as listeners is the light going on and saying, "Okay, wait a minute." Take that, and mirror it to back to them, and that could set the whole thing of release off.

But that too usually happens only after they've had a good run at their stories.

Once they've gone through their entire story once, I don't stop there. If you simply pause and allow what's next to come up, you'll find people circling back and wanting to tell the story again. And what are they doing?

They've taken the first cut to establish the facts. Now the second cut usually turns out to be about "How do I feel about those events?" So I call the first cut the factual one and the second one the emotional cut.

There can even be a third cut in which they go over the story again to see whether there's anything left out. It's kind of a clean-up.

It can often happen that, on the third cut, they see they aren't finished yet and, when we look, we see that this vasana sits on top of another. So, if we want to really assist the person to go deeply, we can be off listening to a fresh thread.

So I should stop there. I don't want to overload you.

[End of Transcript]

## Appendix 2. Are You Listening?



### Restorative Listening from Upset to Release

#### A Dictionary on Listening

by Steve Beckow

*Hear not the blaming word  
But listen far below it  
To the secret speaking*

*And the silent cry.*

## Four Language Modes

We use language in four ways:

To read  
To write  
To speak  
To listen.

## What is Listening?

Listening involves (1) entering into a relationship of communication with another, (2) being aware of their words and other expressive symbols, and (3) taking in, understanding and mirroring back the message they wish to communicate.

Entering into relationship is the pre-requisite to listening. Being aware of their full communication is the *sine qua non* of listening. Understanding another is the desired result.

To listen means paying attention to someone's communication with the intention of understanding completely that person's expressed (and sometimes unexpressed) message and experience in its entirety, without misunderstanding.

Most of us listened before we learned to speak. Listening therefore is prior to speaking, whether we refer to a baby who does not understand language or to a foreigner who does not understand a certain language.

To do this, the listener should reply back to the speaker, in the speaker's own words if necessary, what the speaker has said. This process of feeding back or mirroring is fool-proof in the sense that, if the listener has heard inaccurately, the speaker will correct him. The listener is never wrong; he only misunderstands.

The speaker at the same time should aim for reaching deeply inside and expressing clearly and certainly what is there to be communicated. Usually, speakers communicate in "chapter headings." That is, their

initial statement tells the subject they'd like to communicate on and must be unwrapped or unbundled.

Whether for personal or professional purposes, everyone could afford to improve his or her listening skills.

Notice all the courses on public speaking. Have you ever seen one on public listening? You've probably attended courses in communication skills, but how many of them had a listening component? There are chapters in books on the transmission of coded linguistic messages but not on the receiving and deciphering of them. As a society we've basically ignored listening as a social activity. We're a society fixated on the power of the lips and ignorant of the power of the ear. We have ways of speaking about language as it is spoken and written, but no way of speaking about language as it is heard.

### **The Building Blocks of Communication**

The key to the success of listening is for the listener to want to listen completely, fully, 100 percent. Often to do this, the listener must create the speaker's undeveloped communication as a mystery, a puzzle, a conundrum, which the listener has an acute interest in helping to reveal or know.

In the days that I was considering counselling as a career, I would often problem solve with my clients,. I would listen to them for a while and then suggest a line of action.

But I continually saw people refuse to entertain my solutions and insist instead on finishing their story - even if I had what I considered to be the right answer! Telling the story seemed much more important to them than solving what I regarded as a problem. When I finally relaxed and saw listening itself as the proper approach to the speaker's need, I found them solving their own "problems." All I needed to do was listen. This was definitely an easier way of counselling than problem-solving, which I had always found quite stressful.

Say goodbye in here to problem-solving or advising. Your job as counsellors is about to become 100 percent more effective and 100 percent easier. You are about to become listeners.

You probably weren't taught listening in the family or in school (few of us were). Listening is more than simply turning one's face in another's direction and catching words thrown at us. That's communicational baseball, at most a precursor of listening.

Listening means deeply and fully hearing another's thoughts and feelings, understanding their meaning and intention, and seeing what they want and don't want, what they need and don't need, without judging or evaluating.

Listening often involves unravelling a jumble. Or it may require developing the "chapter headings" people so often speak in. Or it may mean "cracking their code."

Only when it's safe to talk will it usually be rewarding to listen. Given deadlines and interruptions, it's usually hard to have people speak from their heart and harder still to listen deeply. But, if the listening space is safe and free from distractions, the more willing will people be to reveal themselves in speaking.

### When to Listen

People want to talk often when they experience too much joy or too much upset. When they're wild about an accomplishment or down about something that happened, they want to talk about it.

They may not stop until you acknowledge that you've heard them and what you heard. Joy-full people who aren't heard often grind their feelings down and suppress themselves. Then they say that no one cares, no matter how well they do.

People also want to be listened to when they're upset. An upset occurs when we feel our button has been suddenly pushed - alarms go off and we feel ourselves suddenly irritated, mad, or frustrated.

Some experience their upsets with storm and thunder. Others go more deeply into themselves and experience their upsets silently. Some glare; others stare with glassy eyes. Few expect to encounter someone who can listen and who cares to.

An upset is a present-time interruption in well-being in some important way related to earlier, similar events.

An issue is a strongly-held preference regarding a way of being or acting that conditions our acting and thinking in the future.

An interpretation is a persistent view of one's self and the world that establishes the "box" within which thinking and acting take place.

If we were to look at an upset under the microscope we'd see that the course of an upset is as follows. In the flow of time, something is said or done that triggers us. We feel an upsurge of strong emotion. We block others and begin to act according to a role. We withhold. We reach a peak and explode. After the release of our explosion, we gradually return to normal, only to survey the damage that we have done.

If we experience repeated major upsets, we may reach a breaking point. We draw a conclusion about affairs or life. From our conclusion, we create an interpretation of life. We make numerous decisions based on our conclusion and interpretation.

Soon these matters result in a rule being formed and issues arising which tell us how we are to behave in future so as to avoid falling into the same upsets again. These conditioned ways of acting become our identity, the "box" from which we do not stray. As listeners, we can listen for all these clues to the "box" in which the speaker has imprisoned himself.

An upset usually follows a loss or defeat of some kind. It can arise from blocked momentum or thwarted intentions, frustrated expectations or undelivered communications.

People in an upset experience strong emotions carrying them too far up or too far down for them to maintain unblocked relationship with others and with themselves. They usually relate by tensing the musculature of their bodies, reducing awareness, or withholding communication or participation. They may retreat into an act or role that has value for them as a survival strategy or coping skill.

An upset usually grows until we reach a peak of emotional experience. We often say or do things which we normally suppress. Although we think our present circumstances determine how we respond, listening shows us that our response is predominantly coloured by our past experiences.

We cast contemporary people in past roles belonging to parents or friends, making them stand-ins and saying things to them that properly should be said to the originals of their type.

After fully expressing ourselves from inside the upset, we may feel temporary relief, but we leave a trail of damage and residue in our path, like a tornado ripping through town.

We may have gone out of relationship with our loved ones and now must work our way back in. We may feel obliged to make our damaging actions right and cause further damage. We may have committed ourselves to courses of action that we later regret. Our family and friends may hold us at arm's length afterwards. In some cases, our treasured relationships may end.

Restorative listening involves recognizing when an individual is caught in an upset, gripped by an issue, or imprisoned within an interpretation. It involves knowing when to listen and when to stop listening.

And it involves using a range of approaches to facilitate the speaker's sharing in such a manner that the speaker himself or herself moves towards release.

### **We Usually Don't Listen**

"We think that we hear one another, but we don't listen very long or very deeply to each other. We are easily distracted by our own thoughts or by events happening in our environment." (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 80.)

"When we really 'hear,' we feel acceptance, compassion, love, respect. We don't want to give the other person a lecture or try to fix him or her. We just feel good that the person felt safe enough to communicate honestly with us." (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 80.)

“When we really ‘hear’ another person, we hear ourselves. We know it could be us talking. There is that equality. There is that rapport.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 80.)

Listen to the truth, openly and deeply, without:

- Being impatient
- Ignoring the other person
- Listening to our own thoughts
- Defending
- Deflecting
- Playing "broken record"
- Playing "twenty questions"
- Discounting
- Denying
- Justifying or
- Excusing.

### What does not Constitute Listening

- Blaming and shaming
- Preaching, moralizing, and lecturing
- Ordering and bossing
- Admonishing and accusing
- Ridiculing and belittling
- Bribing and threatening
- Interrogating and analyzing
- Counselling and advising
- Being sympathetic or sarcastic
- Diagnosing and prognosing

Using mixed messages that deny or minimize. The worst thing in the world to say to an upset person is: “Don’t be upset.” Since they’re ALREADY upset, they may feel crazy and react.

Giving advice. Most listeners give up the impact of their listening by hiving off too soon into advice. Make sure you’ve listened fully before you advise. Better still: hold the advice and just get the beef. Good listening almost always makes advice unnecessary.

When I'm speaking and another is listening and they begin to advise me rather than listen, my heart often feels like it'll break. I wish they'd be quiet and just listen.

I can't hear their advice over top of my upset. I often just say, "Yah. Yah. Yah" and hope they'll fall silent again. If they go on too long, the thread is broken, my train of thought is lost, and I drop the idea of trying to tell them anything. They've shown that the session is about them, not me.

Having no time or space. Listening is difficult when you put aside too little time for it or talk in a busy setting. If you really want another person to open up, choose a relaxed and quiet place and a time free from interruptions.

Misunderstanding can lead the speaker into frustration. A lack of attention from the listener may lead the speaker into irritation. A lack of grounding may lead the speaker into resignation.

When these outcomes occur, the speaker may feel cheated and incomplete. Or the person may feel despondent, thinking that he or she is not worth listening to.

Usually we are talking to ourselves because very few people really listen and we seldom expect them to.

I recall once talking about an upset to a listener who wasn't listening. I wasn't feeling restored, I felt some relief from talking about my upset and listening to myself but I was nonetheless leaving a residue of blame generated from resentment at not being listened to. My friend was alternately silent or absent-mindedly commenting "yah?" This mode is nonetheless what society often thinks of as "listening." It is simply a garbage can into which I was throwing my trash.

What she could have been doing was taking the initiative by drawing me out and reconstructing the upset with me, treating it like a puzzle.

### **Listening is not Judging**

"If judgments come up, remember that you aren't listening: you're judging." (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 79.)

## **Listening is not Responding**

“Don’t respond in any way except to acknowledge that you have heard. If you are responding, you have stopped listening.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 79.)

## **Listening cannot be forced**

“Even when we agree that others should have a voice [in the decisions that affect them], it doesn’t mean that we are willing to listen. And, unless we are willing to listen, what does having a voice mean? What does free speech mean if we are always putting our hands over our ears?

“Our society says that everyone has a right to speak, but it cannot make us listen. It cannot insure that we will hear what others say to us or that they will hear what we say to them. Hearing has always been optional. It has always been a matter of choice.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 78-9.)

Hearing others is a form of loving [others]. And love has never been successfully legislated. You cannot make somebody love another person, nor can you make someone listen to another. (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 79.)

## **The Fifty-Minute Hour**

The psychotherapist’s fifty-minute hour is deadly for speaking to release. Two to three hours may be needed to get the full picture of an upset.

## **Everyone wants to be heard**

“All any one wants is to be heard, to be cared about and respected. These are universal human concerns. As a husband or wife, we should extend this caring and respect to our partner. As a parent, we should extend it to our children. As a community, we should extend it to all our members: rich or poor, black or white, able-bodied or disabled.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 78.)

## **Listening Shows We Care**

Listening is probably the easiest and most appreciated way to show we care. The deeper we go in our listening, up to the point of release, the more the person feels cared for.

### Listening as Wisdom

The Chinese word for a wise person, sheng jen, means literally "one who listens." International mediators Arnold Gerstein and James Reagan stress the importance of listening in their book, *Win-Win*. Peace activist Joanna Rogers Macy has called listening "the most powerful tool in peacemaking and any other kind of social change work." (Diane Dreher, *The Tao of Inner Peace*. New York: Harper, 1990, 243.)

### Listener as Mirror

If a person is to get through blocks and phobias, the listener has to remain calm when they reveal themselves to us. I am like a looking glass in which they judge their acts through observing my response. So if I respond with alarm or disgust, they may feel quite self-conscious and ashamed and be unable to go deeper.

### My Life as a Listener

Many people consider effective speaking to be the crown of communicational skills. I consider it to be listening.

My job in life is to help the world learn to listen better.

In my family, I was the youngest of two children. I had to listen to my father, mother, and older brother and no one had to listen to me. So I grew up wanting people to listen to me.

As a child, I never knew how to get along with people so I had to do it when I was older. Then, as a teacher, I taught what I had learned to others. One way I learned to get along with people, especially when I didn't know what to say (which was often), was to listen.

Listening to and understanding others became for me a survival skill.

When I became a sociology doctoral student and looked at becoming a counsellor, I would wrack my brains trying to solve the problems of the people I'd work with. I'd sit there listening to them, on edge and nervous, wondering how I'd think of ways to solve their dilemmas.

Many people wouldn't listen to my solutions but would return to their stories as soon as I had finished offering my solution. I pondered that. People really wanted to tell their stories. So I hit upon what was for me an entirely new and different approach to counselling, which involved simply listening to the other person and observing that they themselves, when they told the truth, reached a point of release and were restored to themselves. This, for me, made counselling effortless and painless. I could listen for hours. I was totally fascinated with other people's lives and stories. And I never had to wrack my brains for a solution to their problems.

During the time that listening was making itself known to me as a therapeutic approach, I was observing that people's early lives existed for them as a puzzle and they experience release in a moment of insight when their puzzle most often became a picture.

I found that a person's whole strategy in life, their whole way of being, could sometimes be set up or triggered by a single incident.

### **Where our Listening Patterns Come from**

Our earliest mentors in listening were our parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and teachers. After these came the postman, milkman, shop owner, police officer, minister, and other officials we encountered in life. After them came employers, colleagues, trainers, professors, and spiritual guides. Most of these sources taught us listening intentionally, but some taught us unintentionally. Traumatic events also teach us - an exam failed or a job lost because we didn't listen.

We often go to see professional listeners - priests, social workers, doctors, psychiatrists, negotiators, mediators. They may contribute thoughts and theories on the subject of listening as they work with us.

### **Benefits of Listening for the Listener**

For those who don't know how to get close to another, listening can provide a safe and effective means.

### **Listening Strategies**

When speaking, a person can push an edge, pull it, or be with it. Any way will work and the possession of three strategies ought to allow one to overcome all obstacles to insight and understanding.

People bring up points repeatedly because they don't feel heard the first time or because they are not sure themselves where they want to go with the subject and are awaiting clarifying feedback.

We can take successive passes at listening to another. Often the first pass allows the speaker to make sense of something. But often the puzzle does not become a picture until they make at least one more pass, during which they explore the emotional truth of the subject.

They may also make a third pass to see if anything has been left out. But when they experience release, they usually have no trouble stopping.

### **Types of Listening**

Communication produces three results: rapport, intimacy, and restoration.

#### ***Listening for Rapport***

Features are acceptance, loyalty, and interest. Joking, kidding, teasing, bonding, building team spirit, creating collegiality, comradeship, making friends. Results are that people like you, like being around you, seek you out, and want to work with you.

#### ***Listening for Intimacy***

Sharing, revealing, letting down the barriers, letting down one's guard. Leads somewhere, often to sexuality. Hurts more and feels better than rapport listening.

If the office is set up to listen for rapport, and I am a listening for intimacy, I can run into problems.

***Restorative Listening: Listening for Release***

Restoration is the recovery of well-being following an upset.

Restorative listening is listening for the meaning and causality of an upset and, with it, an end to or relief from tension.

The kind of deep, restorative listening I'm describing involves successive approximations of the speaker's truth. The listener himself may not have the full picture by the end of the first pass. The listener needs to be prepared to treat the process like the making of a jigsaw puzzle, where one piece has been fitted into the picture while others remain off to the side.

At times, the listener may gently bring in a piece of the puzzle that has been identified but not fitted into the picture. This move should be done tentatively, carefully, as a suggestion and should never be forced on the speaker. The speaker's understanding is what is important, not the listener's. On the odd occasion, the speaker may experience release and the listener may still be unsure what it was that needed to be communicated. Just the same, the listener should release the speaker from further necessity and allow them to go on their way.

**(1) Committed listening acts as a restorative.**

Committed listening helps us untie the knots that bind us and restores us to our original balance and innocence.

Restorative listening is a deep form of listening whose purpose is to release an individual from the limiting or confining influence of an upset, issue, or interpretation. It's different from social listening or intimate listening.

Social listening is fun and results in a back-and-forth and give-and-take that promotes enjoyment and cooperation. Intimate listening goes deeply into matters. It lets both people's guard down and reveals them to each other.

An example of an early experience that set up a way of being is the case of a young woman who was trying to understand why she entered into relationships and quickly left. In the course of talking about her early life, she said that she used to walk into the waters of the ocean and get cold feet and quickly walk out. I asked her if she walked into relationships as well and got cold feet and insight and release occurred for her.

One has to be quick to catch an interpretation as it's spoken. If I had let that comment pass, the conversation may have moved onto other things and release might have been delayed or might never have happened. My job as a listener was to catch the interpretation and feed it back to her.

Listening is often considered passive when effective listening is anything but. The best listening is very active and can involve quick and deft entries into momentarily-glimpsed openings.

Conventional listening catches only the spoken word. But restorative listening listens well below that, below the upset even, to the deeper self that is crying out to be heard and understood. Restorative listening uses any means and device available to it to get at that deeper speaking and treats anything said or gestured as grist for the mill.

Perhaps the person is dramatizing or the truth of what they're saying is revealed when their message is understated. Perhaps they're understating and the truth emerges when their points are emphasized. What's appropriate to do emerges on a case-by-case basis.

The restorative listener takes in gesture, expression, and metaphor to get below the surface of the upset to the true meaning underneath. Often it hears the inner speaking that the speaker has decided is too dangerous to utter but wants to be divined anyways.

In conventional listening we do the bare minimum. Often we store away what the person said, remembering the words only, and remembering them only for a short time, resolving to take in only what can later be seen to be important, as we judge matters to be. This is listening only in name.

Listening done well relieves people of the need to speak. Speaking is done compulsively until a person has been deeply listened to. Once listen to a person completely and they'll often settle down and cease speaking compulsively. For some people, being listened to once completely is an utterly new and joyful experience. It's truly a gift whose value is sometimes inestimable.

Listening over a long-enough period of time creates a critical mass of insight that can lead to release.

Perhaps one day, all counsellors will let go of problem-solving and advice and simply listen.

**(2) The true test of listening is whether the speaker felt listened to and understood.**

What we listen to and understand, predominantly, are the speaker's thoughts and feelings. The listener opens all channels of awareness to receive the message the speaker is intending to convey. Speech, glance, gesture, expression, tonality, pitch, intensity - the listener hears and understands them all.

Restorative listening uses any available, workable means to review the whole story of a speaker's upset, listening until release appears as a smile, an insight, or some other form of relief, shift, or transformation.

Restorative listeners may expand a metaphor, re-experience a feeling, hear the whole history of the upset. They may draw on their own native savvy or from formal theories like Neurolinguistic Programming, Transactional Analysis, or Client-Centred Therapy.

However, they bend their approaches not to such acts of speaking as counselling and advising but simply to listening and understanding. The restorative listener knows the power of listening to afford release from upset.

Solving problems is hard. Dis-solving problems is easy. Listening dissolves problems.

**The Goal of Restorative Listening**

A restorative listener is one who is able to lead a person from upset to release through committed, resourceful listening.

What the goal of restorative listening is is dawning awareness, the experience of insight, discovery, revelation, the penny dropping, eureka, aha! The experience of dawning awareness brings with it release from the unconscious awareness of the upset. When the pieces fall into place, the puzzle becomes a picture. We see it. We know what's going on. We get the picture. Once we do, the puzzle releases its grip on us.

### **What Deep Listening Addresses**

Major or primal upsets

Event

Conclusion

Decision

Resulting Patterns

### **Listening for the Truth**

The test of whether listening has been successful is whether release has occurred. Jesus said, the truth will make you free. And telling the truth to a committed listener will also set us free. If one has not experienced release, one has not told some aspect of the truth that must be told. There's more to go.

We're not listening for games, ulterior motives, the self-serving bias, image management, the dark side or shadow side. We're listening for the truth and the truth alone. And the test for that is release.

Identify the various messages contained in the speaking and choose which to go with.

### **What to Listen for - 1**

When we communicate with one another, we use more than just the spoken word to get our message across. We use vocal tone, pitch, gesture, spacing, and silence. Moreover, we couch our messages in metaphors and images, whether consciously or not. All of these the

listener must be able to catch. The listener must spread his net widely to trap it all.

What to listen for:

Historical Clues

The story/history

Buried memories

Contextual Clues

Conceptual framework

Feelings

Likes and dislikes

Acts, scripts, and records

Issues, outcomes, and decisions

Investments

Intentions

Interpretations

Vocal Cues

Tone

Pitch

Intensity

Behavioral Clues

Expressions

Gestures

Moves

Dress

Settings

Spacing

Timing

Verbal Clues

Metaphors

Imagery

Slang and jargon

Comparisons

Emphases and pauses

Issues and Problems

The difference between issues and problems is that issues are general, subjective, personal, and not measurable while problems are specific, objective, impersonal, and measurable.

## What to Listen for - 2

Preferred choices. A speaker may report a choice that has been offered another. A lot can be learned from a proffered choice. The range of choices offered may betray our bias or intention. If both choices are negative, it probably signals that the speaker is not in favour of the action being considered. If both choices are positive, it probably signals that the speaker is partial to the considered action.

While we may fool ourselves that we are not being seen, others may look at how far or how little we are prepared to go and read the state of our minds from it. “Well, he’s prepared to get into the car and come and pick me up but he’s not prepared to spend the afternoon together.”

Translation: he has something else he’d rather do.

Metaphors. Listen for metaphors like “cold feet” in relationship, etc. Encourage the speaker to take the metaphor literally in order to suss up what is actually being said. The work of listening is to raise what may be deeply unconscious to consciousness, in the process solving many puzzles. Raising metaphors and their significance to everyday awareness is one way it accomplishes its task.

The Code. Understanding the speaker may require “cracking their code” in which they’re speaking.

Chapter Headings. Most people do not expect decent listening. Therefore they telegraph what they say. They speak in chapter headings and unfold the rest of the story only when they are assured that the listener is really listening. Therefore, understanding the speaker may require unfolding the story.

## Release

An upset, issue, conclusion, or interpretation is self-defined and self-applied. Release is also self-instigated and self-triggered.

Release is a restoration of well-being through a sudden insight into an upset, conclusion, act, or issue.

## **Using Progressive Release as Our Guide**

Restorative listening aims at the release of the speaker from upset. One yardstick of whether the listening is working or not is the observation of progressively-increasing levels of release in the speaker. Release may be signalled by the appearance of a smile, a rise in vocal tone, or a relaxed expression or posture.

## **Obstacles to Effective Listening: Our Prejudices or “Always Already Listening”**

On many subjects we may have already made up our mind. If the topic comes up, we feel that we know all about it. We hear through this filter of always-already knowing or prejudging. This “always-already listening” can severely skew a listening session.

Think of listening to a beautiful woman (or man) whom we hope is sexually interested in us to see how always-already listening works. Every word she says is inspected for evidence of sexual interest and everything that shows no indication of that interest is quickly discarded while every new word is deeply examined for any expression of that interest. We have an always-already listening for sexual interest in this example and it colors our listening.

What we’re doing is channelling other people’s communication through the filter of what we want to hear. Meanwhile, they have their own worries, hopes, and fears and are speaking from that matrix. If we truly want to hear what they are communicating rather than what we want to hear, we’ll have to put our always-already listening filter aside.

My always-already listening is that things never work out. I therefore am an already-listening for complaints, breakdown, failure. I’m very guarded and phrases like “everything’s fine” or “it’s easy” or “I’ll do it” don’t come easily to my lips.

If we listen from our already-listening, the speaker will despair of being heard.

We can often detect another person's already-listening by their intonation. An extreme intonation may reflect an earlier trauma which the person does not want to repeat.

### **Obstacles to Listening: Not Speaking the Same Language**

I remember a woman I dated long ago who looked her love at me while I listened for it. I spoke my love in words and she watched for looks and waited for actions. But I did not send loving looks to her and she did not speak words of love to me. We went through months of incomprehension and disappointment before we finally parted company.

Use the terminology the speaker understands. In terms of modality, listen for whether the speaker is a seer, hearer, feeler, toucher, etc. In terms of context, listen for whether they use the language of art, sport, business, computers, etc. Recreate their upset in the language they use. Many communicational breakdowns occur because people speak different languages and don't feel heard or understood. They haven't found a common denominator.

### **Upsets**

Normally people are well and, then, in the face of troublesome, painful, or shocking events, they experience an upset. An upset usually occurs when an individual meets (or meets a reminder of) a frustrated intention, unfulfilled expectation, or shocking loss. An upset shows up for them and for others around them as an interruption in their well-being characterized by:

- Strong emotions
- Diminished participation (or withdrawal)
- Increased tension
- Reduced awareness
- Diminished relationship (or animosity)
- Reaction
- Patterned, automatic, predictable responses.

When we are upset, it looks like the other person's input was crucial. It looks like what they do is determinative of what we do.

An upset usually grows until it reaches a peak of emotional experience. Things may be said or done that are normally suppressed. We cast contemporary people in roles and garb that belong to earlier people. Although we think that our present circumstances dictate our upset, we usually find that their roots lie in the distant past. After experiencing and expressing what is there for us, we usually find the upset subsiding. But we're left with a residue of problems that we create for ourselves and others in the meantime. We may have committed ourselves to courses of action that we later regret. We may have broken agreements and trust. Our friends and family may hold us at arm's length afterwards. In some cases, relationships may end.

Definite events set us off. Some trigger us, hooking us all of a sudden and gripping our attention. A person who resembles another person can be a trigger. An anniversary of a painful event, such as the death of a parent or a lover, can trigger us. The third type is the biological alarm clock. If you're a woman, you might be triggered on your 38th birthday, thinking time is running out for you to have a child.

Some events are not so much a trigger, as a threshold. What this means is that something painful occurs again and again until we are overcome by the cumulative effect.

An upset can lift through being communicated, but a loss may not lift in the same way. Only time may cause the pain of loss to lift.

Put another way, issues can be communicated but only time heals a wound.

Restorative listening involves seeing when a person is in an upset, gripped by an issue or imprisoned in an interpretation and listening in a committed way until the upset is fully explored and released.

### Conclusions and Decisions

When we endure upset after upset after upset related to a particular set of circumstances, we reach a breaking point where we arrive at a commanding conclusion about matters and generate from it a lasting decision. From then on our beliefs are shaped by our conclusions and our action is moulded by our decisions.

Conclusions arise out of repeated upsets. They set up interpretations of life and lead to automatic decisions. If our life becomes simply a process of concluding and then automatically deciding, we become calcified, sclerotic, rigid.

Decisions show how it was, justifying the past and laying down a history. They handle the present by leading to the creation of an act. They handle the future by walling us in with issues.

### **Triggers, Tripwires, and Thresholds**

They set off nuclear explosions

They can be a chain reaction or build-up to critical mass and explosion (“One damn thing after another,” “It never stops,” “I can’t take it any more”)

Or they can be single events like unwitting reminders, anniversaries, and biological alarm clocks

### **History**

Our “history” is a narrative arrangement of selected past events, the recital of which supports our identity or interpretation of who we are. We live experienced events forward, but we often re-live them backwards. The reliving of past events backwards can often confuse the listener. The speaker often does not know the bottom line of relived experiences until he or she has gone through the layers of remembered feelings.

### **Act**

Our acts are constructed, historical interpretations of what and how to be in life to produce the results we desire. Our acts have consistency, reveal conviction, and determine the way we show up in the world.

### **Issues**

Kinds of issues: exceptions, mild objections, strong issues, sacred cows, taboos.

### **Identity**

Our identity shows up as a set of beliefs, histories, acts, and issues that we have relating to ourselves, our place in the world, and the like. It is:

Preconditioned by our beliefs.

Shaped by a history of major, repeated, and related upsets.

Born of a commanding conclusion.

Bent to a lasting decision.

Elaborated and enshrined in an act.

Walled in by issues.

Our identity is insufficient to hold who we really are. We have little chance of discovering who we really are from inside identity.

Our beliefs handle the timeless; our history handles the past; our act handles the present; and our issues handle the future.

### **Past, Present, and Future**

The Past = History

The Present = Acts

The Future = Issues

### **What is the Source of an Upset**

When human beings are beyond upsets, they can expect the heavens to open wide and angels in chariots to descend, whisking them off to God.

Upsets are a hazard of modern-day people being human. Our contribution can lie in helping people find the source of the upset or see the total picture so that the upset can lift.

The real source of an upset usually lies buried in the long-distant past. The source of most upsets seems to lie between birth and age, perhaps, ten. Seldom is the source of a serious upset in the present. The chief players in these early, original upsets is usually the members of our immediate family and our very best and earliest acquaintances. The present “culprit” usually turns out simply to be a stand-in.

Most upsets yield when we understand the person's present situation. If upset people are plunged into early-learned ways of meeting a threat -- getting even, being snide, ignoring others, freezing others out - just acknowledge what they say (remembering that tomorrow it may happen to you) and get the full communication.

### Guidelines for Successful Listening

Create a safe, secure environment for speaking, free from interruptions and distractions. Take the phone off the hook. Close the door. Put a sign up saying "Do Not Disturb." Have enough water, glasses, and kleenex. Visit the washroom beforehand. Have a pad and pencil to make notes for things to do later, rather than getting up and doing them.

If you've made an appointment for restorative listening, avoid making any other appointments that morning, afternoon, or evening. Avoid having to say to your speaker that you must go.

Stay with your listening once begun. Buckle up and go along for the ride. Don't get up repeatedly or make a phone call. Ask permission if you need to go to the bathroom. Don't interrupt to ask. Wait until you make a comment and then tack it on.

Be sure you and the speaker have an agreed-upon "contract." Be sure to have the contract straight before you begin. If you agree not to leave a person until release, then don't.

*Make the other person the number one focus in your life from starting point to release.*

Don't take the spotlight off the listener lest you "break the spell" or destroy their concentration. If you must interrupt, make your interruption short. If you must comment, comment quickly.

Neither interrupt the speaker nor ask questions that break the flow of the narrative. If you positively need to interrupt, ask their permission first and keep it short.

Your job is to assist the string of incidents and responses to come out, not to show how wise you are, not to follow your own avenues of

investigation, not even to investigate. You are there to see what the message is your speaker wants to convey to you.

The speaker usually will not know what that message is, in the beginning. Together you piece it together and then you “get” or understand it. Your job also is to mirror back your understanding, at significant junctures, so that the speaker, who is in the thick of it, can also see what you see. Together, both of you piece the puzzle together until the puzzle becomes a picture.

Identify 100 percent with the speaker. Don’t listen for credibility. Don’t judge the appearance of the self-serving bias. Look underneath the spoken word to the secret speaking that the speaker may not even be aware of.

Ask yourself: “If this were me, what would I be wanting to convey? What would I want other people to know most?” Use the information contained in your own answer to guide your further listening. If you come up with an interesting piece of information, on motive or message, confirm with the speaker whether it’s applicable to him or her.

Don’t set the topic for the speaker to speak on. Let them set the topic. However, expect them to talk about a normal time followed by an upset and the consequences that flowed from the upset.

Don’t impose your point of view on the speaker. Just listen with nothing added. Listen to discover the speaker’s point of view and the full picture.

Some speakers speak from ache to ache. First they notice a pain in their neck and talk until it is released. Then they notice their shoulders sagging and talk until the weight has been removed. Then they notice an ache in their heart and talk until that is released. Each ache is the equivalent of a point being made. Allow them to proceed in the manner they wish or are used to.

Listen from the gross to the subtle, the bundled to the unbundled.

Accept whatever they may say as the very next thing to be said, no matter how it sounds to you. Accept that it was constructed as a string and the logic of construction may not be apparent to you and may be as

simple as “and then, and then, and then.” Think of their points as being dishes that arrive by a dumbwaiter. One dish arrives, and then another, and then another, with no other logic than linear sequence.

Treat what is said as a series of linked comments. As soon as one comment is finished, look for the next link and draw it out.

Let them take deeper and deeper cuts at their story. For it to be fully told, they may need to take one narrative cut, in which all events are told; one emotional cut, in which their response to events is told; then one contextual cut, in which they shorten it up and see if they understand the whole picture; etc.

Get the emotional truth first and the actual truth later, if necessary.

Build your understanding from the progressive sharing of the speaker. Check out how your developing understanding matches their intention in sharing - ask yourself -- and the speaker -- if you are on the right track.

Never blame or hassle the speaker. Don't encounter them or tell them they are full of malarkey. Don't contest the speaker's interpretation. Don't use anything the other says against him (or her). Express no hostility. Put aside your own agenda. Earn the other's trust and keep it.

Put your own agenda aside. Don't ask questions that deflect the speaker from his or her train of thought. If you see the slightest sign of resistance, drop your point and go back to the last point of agreement. An exception might be where you think you can catapult them forward by tying some things together but never do even this in the face of resistance. Be flexible and drop your own point as soon as resistance is encountered. If you get something wrong or space out, acknowledge it and go back to the last point of agreement again.

Keep yourself out of the process. Never try to make a point that arises from or handles your own discomfort. Handle it silently yourself or put it aside. Keep your questions short, devoid of theory, devoid of excuses. Sopeak Peter Rabbit English. Don't hang the speaker up by using theoretical language or latinate diction. Don't draw attention to yourself or say something cute or flashy. The whole process should be focussed on the other person.

Never frame a question so that it jerks the other person out of their process by leaving them wondering what you said or where you're coming from. Be plain and simple. Never say out of the blue something like "Do you hate men?" Say instead "I'm curious to know if events left you hating men." Accept whatever answer they give you as true. If it is not true in the beginning, when they see your trust in them, they will soon begin to tell the truth.

Never ask a question like, "I don't mean to imply that you don't know best for yourself, but could it be that the secret of what was happening lies in what he did after you did what you did?" Ask instead: "What was his reaction?"

Accept that many statements they make will be a mixture of truth and falsity or truth and exaggeration. Hold to that part of what they said that was true. Just go with that and ignore the rest. Or interpret what they say so that the truth is extracted and ask them if your understanding is correct.

Treat the speaker's message as a jigsaw puzzle which you are determined to reconstruct. Be curious. Make the translation. Crack the code. Supply what's missing.

If the speaker is dramatic and exaggerates, divide by two or ten or whatever factor you need to. If the speaker understates, multiply by two or ten. If the speaker is accurate verbally but ingenuine emotionally, supply the emotional truth, and vice versa. Discover the missing pieces that will turn the puzzle into a picture.

Follow every spoken word. Hear the point that's being made, the point that's being implied, and the point underneath it all. Have the other person see that you see the point that is being made. Do not raise the implied point until the time is right and then, if they ask you how you arrived at that understanding, put it down to a hunch.

Do not imply that the speaker is speaking on many levels lest you jam the person into their head instead of leaving them vulnerable and open. Speak to the commitment implied in the point underneath it all. Make it right. Accept it.

Sociologists talk about speakers forming their identity in part on the listener's reaction to what they're saying. If the listener radiates shame, the speaker may stop and change the subject. If the listener radiates admiration, the speaker may wax more eloquent and expansive.

Therefore, to ensure that the speaker will say whatever is necessary to be said, keep your response neutral. See that you avoid excessive or dramatic responses that will push or pull the speaker away from what is there to be said naturally. A speaker may cave in in the face of your emotional display. Caving in is not release.

Never rush the process. Watch for their cues as to your own shakiness in listening. They may remove eye contact from you, not because they are involved in a certain mental process, but because you seem restless and they feel confused. Or they may feel you are invoking premature closure, and they don't want to stop. In this case, drop your agenda and return solidly to listening. They will return eye contact as soon as they receive and confirm your indications of steadfastness.

Words indicating closure include "OK." "Well..." "Uh-HUNH!" Spoken at the wrong juncture, they can seriously confuse or dismay the speaker. Watch their use or else clarify that you were not intending to close the session.

There is a litmus test for whether our listening has been successful: Is the person in release? The truth will set the speaker free. Follow increasing release to the final consummation of freedom from the upset. They will only get at this deep truth in the face of deep and committed listening.

If in our listening, we stop short of listening, the speaker will fall short of release. It's as if we waited two hours for the fireworks show, listened to the announcer and the pyrotechnics experts who were going to stage it describe the show, and then went home before the fireworks happened. We may leave the speaker literally aching.

Do not listen past release. Following release, let the speaker simply end the session and depart. Allow them to be in whatever space they're in. Don't ask for thanks or acknowledgment, either directly or indirectly. Leave them with the insights and understandings they've arrived at:

that's what you have worked to produce so don't now bury those fragile insights under excessive talk or self-centred need.

Whatever you do, don't carry the speaker back into the upset by asking for clarification of a certain point or trying to compare the upset with another facet of the person known to you, etc. Let them go. Let them see that release comes from sharing and listening.

If we drive a person back into the original upset with our questions, they may settle back into their original emotional state and forget what they arrived at, so powerful is the trancelike quality of the puzzle.

### **Second Pass at the Same Topic**

Listen fully and closely, but without rigidity. Full, close listening is one of the best ways to help a person through an upset. As a graduate student, I was used to being with upset people. I saw them come back from the precipice when I listened to three things: (1) the history of the incident, (2) the present-day consequences for the speaker, and (3) how they feel about it all.

Listen until release occurs. An upset may lift at any stage of the conversation - during description of the incident, of the consequences, or of the emotional response to events. A missing piece may suddenly fall in place ("THAT's why he did it!"). Or the big picture may be seen in its entirety in a moment of insight ("Gosh, I see the WHOLE THING!"). When an upset lifts, I say the person is in release.

I know people are in release when they break into a smile. They may glimpse the missing piece that will put them into release, but not feel able to allow themselves to settle into really acknowledging what they've seen.

Often they have just the sheepish trace of a grin. It's my job to say, "What was that that you just saw?" When they acknowledge it, the grin becomes a broad smile; the secret is out; the conversation is over. The truth, as Jesus said, has made them free.

People in release are flexible, present, alive. People in upset are mechanical, absent, withdrawn. The acid test that listening has worked then is that the speaker will be in release.

If listeners continue probing past this point, they can send the speaker back into the upset and they can forget the insight that brought them release. It's better to stop at that moment and allow them to be with what they have seen.

Therefore, listen until, but not past, release. Ask, "Was there anything else?" to ensure full listening. If not, close off and let the person return to their life.

The better you listen, the less credit you'll receive. If you've really made a difference, it will show up as almost totally invisible. The speaker will have the sense of having uncovered everything themselves. Your role will not show up. At best they may thank you for listening. But your true contribution is seldom known.

The best listeners make the process seem effortless, as if a string of words miraculously flowed from the speaker's mouth, regardless of the fact that they started out with lockjaw.

The best listeners pull the words out with delicacy and finesse in a continuous, steady manner.

Don't miss a point in the argument. You may have to back the speaker up to make sure that you don't fail to comprehend a point. But if you allow them to continue while you have missed something, your confusion will shine through and they'll feel frustrated. Ask their pardon. Explain why you've missed a step. Ask them to repeat it and then allow them to move on.

The listener's job is to hear and understand every sentence and every word. Confirm your understanding if you're unclear.

Listen to resistance; then go with it rather than against it. If the person refuses to discuss an obvious aspect of the subject, allow them the space to refuse. If the speaker resists your interpretation, don't force it upon them. Drop it and drop it completely. Be prepared to stand there not

comprehending. Listening is not a place for know-it-alls. It's a deeply humbling experience.

If you try to sell your interpretation to a resistant speaker, they may close down. Let it go and go back to the last point of agreement and begin again. Watch for the delicate signs of resistance - the clouded brow, slowed-down delivery, drooping shoulders, etc. The discussion needs to be about them, not you.

Exception: Occasionally supplying a revealing anecdote about yourself may free them up when they feel too exposed to continue. They may stop and stare at you blankly, too scared to go further out on the skinny branches alone. At that time, you're showing that you too are willing to be vulnerable and they may need to see you have a stake in the process too before they're willing to continue or to go deeper.

Listen to layers. One may be the speaker's thoughts; another, their feelings; another, their druthers; and another what REALLY upset them.

Listening is often multi-dimensional in real-time. It may be linear; then jump to a synthesis when an insight suddenly arises; then proceed again from a totally-altered standpoint. The listener has to move with the alterations and so must be nimble and unattached in their listening.

Listen to the full score. People communicate in an orchestrated fashion. They put some of the score in words. Some of it is in vocal tone, pitch, looks, gestures, intensity. They may grimace, roll their eyes, weave like a dancer, stab the air. Often we don't hear the music because we're simply listening to the words. Good listening means paying attention to the total performance, the full production, the complete score.

Speak a common language. Though we speak English to each other, there is a sense in which we still talk different languages. One person may speak parenting; another, the Wild Country. If one person speaks computerese, speak it back if you can. Talk with byte. Learn the person's program. Know his or her operating system.

If someone else speaks Whistlerian [Whistler is a ski mountain in B.C.], then head straight down the hill (watching for moguls), be willing to jump, and go for the gold. If you can't understand their language,

propose another. “Do you like football? Good. Well, when the quarterback doesn’t know where the wide-end receiver is after the ball is hupped....” Etc. Communication is difficult without a common language.

### **Emotional Truth and Actual/Historical Truth**

The person may not speak the actual truth, but may instead say what is emotionally true for them. Even though they are exaggerating, for instance, the truth is that the way they are describing the situation is the way it felt for them. Appreciate that the way they are speaking is in fact the emotional truth for them.

How the situation feels to a speaker may be more important than how it actually was. As listeners, we are asked to make the emotional truth more important than the historical truth if we are to listen from upset to release. Let the speaker tell his or her version as if it were the plain truth for them. The truth of the situation will come out faster this way than if you correct them at every turn.

### **Calm, Receptive and Connected**

Only by remaining calm, receptive, and connected is the speaker induced to go deeply into the truth.

### **Compassionate Clarity**

“A key reason for knowing yourself with compassionate clarity is so you can hear another person without your stuff getting in the way.” (George Mumford, sports psychologist and meditator, A.G., “Deep Listening,” *O Magazine*, May 2001, 239.)

### **See the Other Objectively**

“You can only hope to find a lasting solution to a conflict if you have learned to see the other objectively, but, at the same time, to experience his difficulties subjectively.” (Former U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in Diane Dreher, *The Tao of Inner Peace*. New York: Harper, 1990, 236.)

### **Opening the heart**

“We're talking about sacrifice here. Listening involves opening your heart, and the heart can get broken very easily.” (George Mumford, sports psychologist and meditator, A.G., "Deep Listening," *O Magazine*, May 2001, 239.)

### Self-control

“There has to be a certain self-control whereby you're able to stay open without the layers of opinions, likes, dislikes, and labels. That's very difficult because you must put all your views and belief systems in abeyance.” (George Mumford, sports psychologist and meditator, A.G., "Deep Listening," *O Magazine*, May 2001, 239.)

### Vulnerability

“The other person has to be willing to be vulnerable as well, willing to give up something.” (George Mumford, sports psychologist and meditator, A.G., "Deep Listening," *O Magazine*, May 2001, 239.)

### Feedback

Feedback is used (1) to confirm our guesses or hunches about what the speaker is saying, and (2) to mirror back the listener's impressions. Here are some useful ways of feeding back:

Sounds/sounds like x  
You sound/you sound like x  
Looks/looks like x  
You look/you look like x  
I hear you/your x  
I see you/your x  
I'd feel x about y; how do you feel?  
I'd think x about y; what do you think?  
I'd want to x; is that what you want?  
I'd feel x; is that how you feel?  
What I'm hearing you say is X.

### Drawing the Speaker Out

Some useful prompts are:

How do you feel about...?  
What do you think about...?  
What would you like to do?  
I'd feel...; is that how you feel?  
I'd think...; is that what you think?  
I'd want to do...; is that what you want to do?  
What would you have done if ... occurred?  
Tell me more about...?  
Can you elaborate on...?  
I'm not sure I understand.... Can you give me more details?  
I'm curious to know about....  
Are you willing to...?  
So you're saying....  
So you feel...?  
So you think....  
So you're saying....  
So what happened for you was....  
Is that the whole story?  
Tell me about it.  
I'd like to hear about it.  
I'm not going anywhere.  
I'm listening.

### **Last Point of Agreement**

(1) When listening is out of synch and a breakdown occurs, go back to the last point of agreement. Wherever you can agree you last understood each other start again there and continue.

(2) When I encounter resistance from a speaker to a question I've proposed, I abandon it and return to the last point of agreement. I keep backing up until I find that point and then proceed by the path of least resistance. I take the decrease in resistance (or increase in ease) to mean that we are back on the right track, in terms of the speaker wanting to be known.

The same steps can be taken to call up forgiveness in ourselves. When we see that another has invited and won our forgiveness, we too can back up

and find the last point of agreement. Both the speaker and the injured party seem quite content just recovering the last point where we agreed, without blame or resentment, and starting again.

### **Justifications**

That's why....

### **Excuses**

I was just....

### **Questions**

How do we listen?

What are the effects of deep, attentive listening?

How do we know when to listen?

How do we know what to listen to and what to ignore?

How do we know when something is more important than something else?

How do we speak?

What are our cultural speaking and listening patterns?

What do we use to emphasize and mark metre?

How do we know when to pause and when to end?

How do we know when we've dropped the ball as a listener?

What are our modalities (see-hearers, feel-hearers)?

### **Reverse Order**

The points a person makes may often come out in the reverse order in which they impressed themselves on the speaker in the first place. We may find ourselves listening backwards, so to speak, and must keep the reverse order of things clear in our minds.

### **Narrative Structure of Stories**

Often people's stories come out as narratives, organized by the structure then, and then, and then. Listen patiently through the whole story.

People may tell their story in layers. The first layer will be the narrative. The second layer will be their emotional response to events. The third layer may be their interpretation or response, etc.

If people do not find release telling the story the first time, let them go through it again and again, until release occurs.

### **Interpreting vs. Understanding**

In interpreting others, I locate them in a conceptual space relative to myself. In understanding them, I locate them in a conceptual space relative to themselves.

### **Tradeoffs**

Many choices involve a tradeoff. The intellectual who lives in his head gives up the sense of the beauty of his surroundings but is less stressed by the multitude of decisions a person who is concerned with his or her surroundings might face. Everything has pros and cons, an upside and a downside.

### **Connections**

When a speaker has an insight into something, we also say they have made a connection. The connection may be between two similar things or conditions, a cause and its effect, a part and a structure, or similar relationships.

### **Levels of Certainty**

Werner Erhard used to say that there were levels of certainty or dimensions of knowing, each more powerful than the preceding. Remaining in mystery about something was less powerful than having a belief. Having a belief was less powerful than actually thinking about something. Thinking about something gave one less of a sense of certainty than having a feeling about it. This in turn was less certain than actually touching something and seeing its reality that way. This in turn was less certain than knowing for sure that you did not know something, even if you touched it. And this was less certain than the natural knowing or

understanding that arose when you knew something directly and immediately.

### **Keep Going**

It doesn't matter what has been said already, keep going with your story. If you want to see where your string leads to and experience release, keep going.

### **Working the Layers**

The minute we share an upset, in our search for release, we clear the space for the next upset to come up. The upsets usually come up in reverse chronology: the latest first, working towards the earliest. Listening is often like travelling back through the ages in a time machine.

### **Natural End**

For those of you who think you may end up listening until hell freezes over, people have an end to their string.

### **Unusual Requirements**

Some people will not get their own numbers unless they are listened to non-judgmentally for an extensive amount of time. Thus, people who see themselves as sick a lot may need to be listened to for a longer amount of time than a person who simply has a problem. These life-interpretations are still susceptible to being understood if enough listening can be brought to them.

### **Stages of Listening**

Listening

Comprehension

Synthesis

Understanding

## **To understand**

To grasp the meaning of, comprehend.

To grasp the reasonableness of.

To have thorough or technical acquaintance with or expertness in the practice of.

To be thoroughly familiar with the character and propensities of.

To accept as a fact of truth or regard as plausible without utter certainty.

To interpret in one of a number of possible ways.

To supply in thought as if expressed.

To have understanding; to have the power of comprehension.

To achieve a grasp of the nature, significance, or explanation of something.

To believe or infer something to be the case.

To show a sympathetic or tolerant attitude towards something.

## **Understanding**

Discernment, insight.

An act or result of interpreting.

The power of comprehending, specifically the capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars.

The power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories.

Friendly or harmonious relationship.

An agreement of opinion or feeling; adjustment of differences.

A mutual agreement not formally entered into but in some degree binding on each side.

## **Release and the Fleeting Smile**

Given that an upset is a space in which we feel withdrawn, depressed, and pained, the arrival of a smile on our face may mean that we have found the bottom line, missing piece, or big picture. But that smile may simply cross our features and disappear. The listener must be very much alert for the fleeting smile which, if he or she has the forethought to ask about, may bring release on in that very instant.

Often when I have asked a person what the fleeting smile was, what they have confided has completely caused the upset to lift. Perhaps they've

seen what they could have done to address the situation and didn't do. Perhaps they've seen that the matter wasn't really as important as they've made it out to be because of other mitigating factors that followed. Whatever the reason, the smile is one of recognition that the upset need not be there and brings release. It is our job to spot it and gently bring it to the speaker's attention with a request for an explanation of it.

### Ways of Mirroring Back

You may see a look of irony on the speaker's face. Yet if you say, "What's ironic about that?" you may raise defensiveness in them and they may deny the look. Better to say, "Ironic, eh?" which they can easily agree with.

### The Full Story

All most people want to do is tell the full story and be heard, once in their lifetimes. Many people have never been heard to that extent, except perhaps when their relationships were new and fresh.

The full story comprises the events, the details, the emotions, the consequences, the reflections, the beliefs, and the decisions.

### Life-Interpretation

Your life-interpretation is your life in a nutshell. "I'm not good enough." "Nobody likes me." There is nothing wrong with a life-interpretation *per se*, if it serves us and is life-sustaining.

### A Brilliant Conversationalist

Good listening is invisible. The speaker believes that he reached release all through his own efforts. The contribution of the other is unseen. And yet, the speaker walks away considering the listener to be, as one person once remarked to me, a "brilliant conversationalist." The speaker does not know how release occurred but is very grateful for it.

### Results of Listening

“When people are heard, they feel honored and respected. They can extend caring and courtesy to others who have different points of view. And so a variety of viewpoints and perspectives can be considered. The best decisions are made when this happens. ...

“When the ideas of people are not heard and they are not included in the decision-making process, they feel that no one cares about them. When children or adults feel cut off and uncared for, they react in hurt and angry ways. Any action that is taken on their behalf will be resented, if not opposed.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 77.)

“Many of us believe that we listen, but it’s not true. Listening, if we did it deeply and fully, would totally transform our lives.” (Paul Ferrini, *The Ecstatic Moment*, 79.)

### Listening to Oneself

Unfortunately, good listeners are hard to come by. Until they are not, you may need to furnish yourself with the listening you need.

There are a number of ways to describe the process of listening to yourself. You could call it a two-handed internal conversation. You could say you make an object of yourself.

Any way you characterize it, you play both speaker and listener internally. Give it all you’ve got because you yourself need listening more than anyone, if you’re to be there for another.

### Teaching Listening

When I grew up, listening was not taught in schools or elsewhere in society. Only speaking was taught. Listening was taken for granted.

Edward Hall said that time has a voice and space speaks, but who is listening? I went through a collection of anthropology readers when I was in college looking for articles on listening, but I found anthropologists studying speaking in many cultures but not listening. Whatever the reason, listening begged no notice, received no attention, and remained unformulated.

Listening seemed to be regarded as a non-activity, a negative. Speaking was the activity, the positive. Perhaps that's why so many of us talk on top of each other: only speaking is valued. The speaker is the initiator, the contributor; the listener is seen as merely sitting there, passively, receptively.

But listening involves more than just sitting there, more even than just hearing. It involves seeing, feeling, being touched; it involves remembering, assembling, understanding; it involves feeding back, mirroring, and resolving.