

**Title of Educational Activity:**

**Mindful Listening**

**Purpose / Goals:**

To provide information and techniques to assist the health care provider in communicating more effectively through the patient / care giver relationship; as listening is a significant part of the communication process.

Objectives	Content (Topics)	Teaching/ Learning Resources
List the educational objectives.	Provide an outline of the content/topic presented and indicate to which objective(s) the content/topic is related.	List teaching/learning resources used for each topic or content area.
<p>1. Identify the role of listening in the communication process.</p> <p>2. Discuss the various aspects involved in the development of skillful listening.</p> <p>3. Discuss the difficulties inherent in the listening process.</p> <p>4. Apply the concepts necessary for two-way communication.</p>	<p>I. Communication Process</p> <p>A. Listening</p> <p>B. 3 levels of listening</p> <p>C. Differentiate between hearing and listening</p> <p>D. Humans listen at a 25% efficiency rate</p> <p>II. Development of listening skills</p> <p>A. Listening is a learned skill</p> <p>B. Hearing is biological process</p> <p>C. Domestication / Socialization process</p> <p>1. O.K. attitudes</p> <p>2. Drama triangle</p> <p>3. Filters</p> <p>4. Listening is selective</p> <p>5. Hearing what you want</p> <p>6. Biased listening</p> <p>7. Emotions and listening</p> <p>8. Styles of listening</p> <p>9. Semantics</p> <p>10. Emotional prejudice / politics</p> <p>11. Conditioned listening</p> <p>D. Non-verbal communication –</p> <p>1. body language</p> <p>2. visual distraction – looking, touching</p> <p>3. sensory influence – smell, taste</p> <p>E. Guidelines for empathetic listening</p> <p>1. set aside ego</p> <p>2. eliminate distractions</p> <p>III. Listening is hard</p> <p>A. People won't pay attention to your point of view unless you hear and appreciate theirs</p> <p>B. Visual prejudices</p> <p>1. short</p> <p>2. tall</p> <p>3. black</p> <p>4. white</p> <p>C. Conflict to let go of our own needs</p> <p>IV. Listening is a 2 way communication</p> <p>A. Empathetic listener</p> <p>1. provides helpful feedback</p> <p>2. speaker feels valued</p> <p>B. Listening as healing</p> <p>C. Listening to ourselves</p>	<p><u>Video Tape</u>  <b><i>Mindful Listening</i></b>  <b><i>Georgianna Donadio D.C., M.Sc., Ph.D</i></b></p> <p><u>Assigned Reading:</u></p> <p><b><i>Course handouts</i></b></p> <p><u>Written Assignment:</u>  <b><i>Write an essay describing how you will apply the information on mindful listening to a patient situation. Discuss also how you would incorporate this information to your personal relationships.</i></b></p>

## David Huron: Listening Styles and Listening Strategies

April 1, 2008

In a presentation at the Society for Music Theory David Huron proposed 21 *listening modes*:

1. Distracted listening
2. Tangential listening
3. Metaphysical listening
4. Signal listening
5. Sing-along listening
6. Lyric listening
7. Programmatic listening
8. Allusive listening
9. Reminiscent listening
10. Identity listening
11. Retentive listening
12. Fault listening
13. Feature listening
14. Innovation listening
15. Memory scan listening
16. Directed listening
17. Distance listening
18. Ecstatic listening
19. Emotional listening
20. Kinesthetic listening
21. Performance listening

# Listening styles

There are four styles of listening that people use when listening, depending on their preferences and purpose, as originated by Barker (1971) and developed with Watson (1995).

## ***People-oriented***

Those who are people-oriented show a strong concern for others and their feelings. They are external in focus, getting their energy from others and find much meaning in relationships, talking about 'we' more than 'you' or 'they'.

They will seek to understand the life stories of others and use storying themselves as a means of understanding. They will focus on emotions, be empathetic and use appeal to emotion in their arguments. They may seem vulnerable and will use this to show that they are harmless.

They can find problems when they become overly involved with others and 'go native'. This can impair their sense of judgment and ability to discriminate. They may associate so strongly with others they do not see limitations and faults, and may be drawn into unwise relationships.

They also may be seen as intrusive when they seek to connect with others who are not so relationship-oriented.

## ***Content-oriented***

People who are content-oriented are interested more in what is said rather than who is saying it or what they are feeling. They assess people more by how credible they are and will seek to test expertise and truthfulness.

They focus on facts and evidence and happily probe into detail. They are cautious in their assessment, seeking to understand cause-and-effect and sound proof before accepting anything as true. They look for both pros and cons in arguments and seek solid logical argument.

They can run into trouble when they ignore the ideas and wishes of the other person and may 'throw the baby out with the bathwater', rejecting information because it does not have sufficient supporting evidence.

### ***Action-oriented***

Action-Oriented listeners focus on are interested first on what will be *done*, what actions will happen, when and who will do them.

They seek 'so what' answers in their questions and look for plans of action. They like clear, crisp descriptions and answers that are grounded in concrete reality. They like structure, bullet-points and numbered action items.

They can be impatient and hurry speakers towards conclusions. They may also be critical of people who start with the big picture and talk in ideas or concepts. This can lead them to appear overly concerned with control and less with the well-being of other people.

### ***Time-oriented***

People who are time-oriented have their eyes constantly on the clock. They organize their day into neat compartments and will allocate time for listening, though will be very concerned if such sessions over-run.

They manage this time focus by talking about time available and seeking short answers which are to the point. This may constrain and annoy people who are focused first on people elements and want to take as long as is needed.

# Three Steps to Empathetic Listening

by Julie Fuimano

Do you take the time and effort to hear what other people are saying so that you understand what they are trying to communicate? When was the last time you felt truly heard and understood? We all have an underlying need to be understood.

Oftentimes, people are too busy, they don't make the effort, or they simply don't know how to listen empathetically to others. And it is because of this that people have difficulty getting in touch with their feelings and they harbor negative emotions about others. It is also one reason why there is so much conflict in relationships both at work and at home.

In fact, poor communication costs us greatly. In organizations, it contributes to negativity and poor morale, and leads to decreased productivity, unsatisfactory work relationships, decreased profits, and high staff turnover.

And it can be deadly for relationships-romantic, familial, and friendships-which will crumble without a foundation of respect and good communication.

What does it mean to be empathetic? It means to stand in someone else's shoes and look at life from their reference point. For that moment, you attempt to look at and assess the situation through their eyes.

It does not mean that you must agree, simply that you understand what they are saying and how they are feeling. When you can relate to another at this level, you respect them as a human being.

**Empathy means standing in someone else's shoes and looking at life through their reference point**

And it is this need that people have to feel respected-for simply being alive, for having thoughts and ideas and a perspective-that lessens people's fear of insignificance. It makes people feel important when you show them that they matter simply by listening to them.

Communication is a powerful tool, perhaps the most powerful tool we have as human beings. It has the power to hurt or heal, hinder or help, tear down, tear apart, or bring together.

Only 7% of communication is verbal. This means, it is what you say when you are not speaking that matters most. This includes your actions, body language, and presence-how you show up in the world through your attitude, mood, and energy-as well as how you do what you do, how you say what you say, and your ability to listen to understand.

### ***Master the skill with these steps***

There are three steps to mastering the skill of listening:

#### ***1. Give the person your full attention***

This is not a time to multitask. If you are doing something else, then your attention is there and not on listening to understand. For example, if you're washing dishes and your child wants to tell you something, stop what you're doing and turn to your child.

If you need a few minutes to finish that project or email before comfortably being interrupted by an employee, then let the person know that. Create the space you need to be able to listen completely. This empowers you to take control of your interruptions and to choose what you focus on in any given moment.

#### ***2. Don't talk while the other person is talking***

Your job is to hear what they are saying and listen for the heart of the message, what's going on behind the words. The fact is that many people have difficulty getting their thoughts out of their mouths in a cohesive way. Be curious. What is the point they are trying to make? What do they want you to know? What do they need from you? Only speak to ask questions that will clarify what you are hearing so that you can better understand them, and so they can better understand themselves.

#### ***3. Summarize what you heard***

This is important because it shows them that you are listening and that you really get what they are saying. If you didn't hear correctly or completely, let the person provide additional information and then repeat your understanding of what they have said.

It sounds simple and it is, but like any change, it will require diligent attention, practice, and continued development and improvement. You will need to exercise self-control and muster patience especially if you have bad communication habits.

## Some bad habits you may need to replace

As you begin to pay closer attention to your behavior, you may find that you have developed some really poor habits when it comes to listening. You cannot change a habit; you have to replace it with a new one.

Since awareness is the key to change, here are several common habits that you may recognize:

- Interrupting with your own ideas and thoughts.
- Finishing the person's sentence for them as if you know what they are saying or to hasten the conversation.
- Changing the subject to focus on a thought you had so the conversation shifts to you and away from them.
- Focusing on solving their problem rather than simply listening and discovering what they need from you.
- Thinking about something other than what the person is saying—having your mind drift away to other subjects, thinking about how you will respond, or doing something else while the person is speaking so your attention is elsewhere.

Sometimes, you don't want to hear what the person is telling you and you become defensive. This should signify that there is a lesson here for you. What are you defending? Are you too attached to your ideas or to being right? Are you taking something personally? Use this emotion as a message for self-discovery. What is this message of "defensiveness" trying to communicate to you?

Empathetic listening is about uncovering and experiencing for yourself what other people are experiencing. Remember, you don't have to agree; just step into their shoes to see the world from their perspective.

When you focus your attention on understanding, acknowledging the individual, and helping the person to express their own truth, you build credibility and make them feel that they matter. When people feel accepted and respected, they are more productive, more willing to cooperate, and more amenable to change.

The simple act of listening builds bridges of trust, mends hearts, creates strong connections, and deepens relationships. It is well worth the effort.

Julie Fuimano, MBA, RN of Nurturing Your Success Inc., is an executive and personal coach, with a passion for helping people take the challenging journey to a new level of success. Contact Julie at (610) 277-2726 or email: [Julie@NurturingYourSuccess.com](mailto:Julie@NurturingYourSuccess.com) to arrange a coaching consultation. *The Journey Called YOU: A Roadmap to Self-Discovery and Acceptance* - available wherever books are sold. Sign up for her inspiring e-newsletter at [NurturingYourSuccess.com](http://NurturingYourSuccess.com).





## Listen With Your Eyes

### Tips for Understanding Nonverbal Communication

By Susan M. Heathfield, About.com

Is there ever any doubt in your mind as to the mood of a coworker upon their arrival at work? Nonverbal communication is the single most powerful form of communication. More than voice or even words, nonverbal communication cues you in to what is on another person's mind. The best communicators are sensitive to the power of the emotions and thoughts communicated nonverbally.

Nonverbal communication ranges from facial expression to body language. Gestures, signs, and use of space are also important in nonverbal communication. Multicultural differences in body language, facial expression, use of space, and especially, gestures, are enormous and enormously open to misinterpretation.

One of the funniest – yet saddest – nonverbal exchanges I have ever witnessed occurred in the registrar's office at a major university. A multinational student tried to communicate his problem to an older, white female. He gesticulated constantly waving his hands to punctuate his communication.

He tried to narrow the distance between himself and the university employee who kept backing away to maintain her level of spacial comfort. By the end of the conversation, the student was chasing her the length of the countertop still gesturing with his hands heatedly. The employee told me later that she had been terrified of the student who was merely trying to tell her that he had already paid the bill he had just received from the university.

One study at UCLA indicated that up to 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. Another study indicated that the impact of a performance was determined 7 percent by the words used, 38 percent by voice quality, and 55 percent by the nonverbal communication.

If you want to mask your feelings or your immediate reaction to information, pay close attention to your nonverbal behavior. You may have your voice and words under control, but your body language including the tiniest facial expressions and movement can give your true thoughts and feelings away. Especially to a skilled reader of nonverbal cues, most of us are really open books.

Here are several tips for improving your reading of nonverbal information. No matter your position at work, improving your skill in interpreting nonverbal communication will add to your ability to share meaning with another person.

Shared meaning is my definition of communication. Correct interpretation of nonverbal communication will add depth to your ability to communicate.

## Tips for Understanding Nonverbal Communication

- Recognize that people communicate on many levels. Watch their facial expressions, eye contact, posture, hand and feet movements, body movement and placement, and appearance and passage as they walk toward you. Every gesture is communicating something if you listen with your eyes. Become accustomed to watching nonverbal communication and your ability to read nonverbal communication will grow with practice.
- If a person's words say one thing and their nonverbal communication says another, you are wont to listen to the nonverbal communication – and that is usually the correct decision.
- Assess job candidates based on their nonverbal communication. You can read volumes from how the applicant sits in the lobby. The nonverbal communication during an interview should also elucidate the candidate's skills, strengths, weaknesses, and concerns for you.
- Probe nonverbal communication during an investigation or other situation in which you need facts and believable statements. Again, the nonverbal may reveal more than the person's spoken words.
- When leading a meeting or speaking to a group, recognize that nonverbal cues can tell you:
  - when you've talked long enough,
  - when someone else wants to speak, and
  - the mood of the crowd and their reaction to your remarks.Listen to them and you'll be a better leader and speaker.

Understanding nonverbal communication improves with practice. The first step in practice is to recognize the power of nonverbal communication. I'm sure you've had gut feelings that what a person said to you was untrue. Listen to your gut. Along with your life experiences, training, beliefs and all that make up your past, it's your inner expert on nonverbal communication.

# Mindfulness of Ourselves

## Mindfulness of Others

by Thich Nhat Hanh

excerpts from a talk delivered Saturday evening  
September 28, 2002, Peace Walk 2002 in  
Memphis, Tennessee

“Let us enjoy our breathing.  
Breathing in--I feel I am alive.  
Breathing out--I smile to life.  
To Life...smiling to life”

Anger. There's a seed of anger in every one of us. There is also a seed of fear, a seed of despair. And when the seed of anger manifests, we should know how to recognize it, how to embrace it, and how to bring [ourselves] relief. When the seed of fear manifests itself as energy in the upper level of our consciousness, we should be able to recognize it, to embrace it tenderly, and to transform it. And the agent of transformation and healing is called mindfulness.

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Mindfulness is another kind of energy that is in us in the form of a seed also. If we know how to practice mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful smiling, then we should be able to touch the seed of mindfulness in us and transform it into a zone of energy. And with that energy of mindfulness, we can recognize our anger, our fear, and our despair. We practice recognizing and embracing. When a mother working in the kitchen hears the cries of her baby, she puts anything she is holding down and goes to the room of the baby, picks the baby up and holds the baby dearly in her arms. We do exactly the same thing when the seed of anger and fear manifest in us; our fear, our anger is our baby. Let us not try to suppress and to fight our fear and our anger. Let us recognize its presence; let us embrace it tenderly like a mother embracing her baby.

When a mother embraces her baby, the energy of tenderness begins to penetrate into the body of the baby. The mother does not know, yet, what is the cause of the suffering of the baby, but the fact that she is holding the baby tenderly can already help. The energy of tenderness and compassion in a mother begins to penetrate into the body of the baby, and the baby gets some relief right away. The baby may stop crying. And if the mother knows how to continue the practice of holding the baby mindfully, tenderly, she will be able to discover the cause of the suffering of the baby.

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When the seed of anger is watered, when the seed of fear is watered, whether by yourself or by another person or by the mass media--because the mass media in this country has watered a lot the seed of anger and fear in us--we should know how to recognize, embrace and bring relief to our anger and our fear.

The attitude is the attitude of non-duality, non-violence. Our fear, our anger are not our enemies; they are us. We have to treat our fear, our anger in a most non-violent way, the most non-dualistic way, like we are treating our own baby. So if you are a good practitioner of meditation, you will know exactly what to do when the seed of anger is watered and begins to manifest in the upper level of your consciousness. With the practice of mindful breathing or mindful walking, you generate the energy of mindfulness, and exactly with that energy, you can recognize the energy of anger, of fear in you.

Anger is... energy number one. By practicing mindful breathing or mindful walking, we generate the energy number two: the energy of mindfulness. We call it in Buddhist terms: mindfulness of anger. Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. When you drink your water mindfully, that is called mindfulness of drinking. When you eat mindfully, that is called mindfulness of eating. When you breathe mindfully, in and out, that is called mindfulness of breathing. When you walk mindfully, it is called mindfulness of walking. So, when you recognize your anger, embrace your anger tenderly with that energy of mindfulness, it is called mindfulness of anger, mindfulness of despair, mindfulness of fear. We should be able to learn and help the young people to learn how to do it. It's very important.

The Buddha offers us very concrete and simple exercises in order to become mindful. The first exercise on mindful breathing is: Breathing in--I know I am breathing in. Breathing out--I know I am breathing out. You can reduce the length of the sentence to one word. In. Out. While you are breathing in, you just recognize that this is your in breath, and you use the word, in. And you are wholly concentrated on your in breath. Nothing else. You become your in breath. You're not thinking of anything. You're not thinking of the past, of the future, of your projects. You release everything. You just follow your in breath, and you become one with your in breath. And the energy of mindfulness is generated together with the energy of concentration.

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If you are an organic gardener, you know that a flower is made of several elements that may be called non-flower elements: the sunshine, the cloud, the minerals and the seed. And among the non-flower elements, there is the element compost... garbage. The garden always produces garbage. If you are an organic gardener, you know how to handle the garbage. You know the techniques of transforming the garbage back into compost and into flowers. You don't have to throw away anything at all. So, the energy of fear, of anger should be considered to be the garbage. Let it be produced, because it can become the art of mindful living.

So, now we should learn how to handle the garbage in us, namely, craving, anger, fear and despair. We should not be afraid of the garbage in us if we know how to transform it back into joy, into peace.

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...Mindfulness has the power, has the capacity of helping us to recognize what is there in the present moment. When anger is there, we recognize the fact that anger is there. When fear is there, we recognize the fact that fear is there. And the practice is not to fight, to suppress, but to recognize and to embrace.

"Oh my little anger, I know you. You are my old friend. I will take good care of you. Oh my little fear, I know you are always there. I will take good care of you." That is the attitude of non-duality, the attitude of non-violence, because we know that mindfulness is us; love is us; but fear and anger are us, also.

Let us not fight. Let us only take care and transform. The organic gardener doesn't have to fight the garbage placed in (or created by) the garden. She knows exactly what to do in order to handle the garbage, in order to transform it back into cucumber, into tomatoes, et cetera.

The first function of mindfulness is to recognize what is there, positive or negative. The second function of mindfulness is to embrace it and to get deeply in touch with it. If it is a positive thing like a blue sky or the beautiful face of a child, that becomes something very nourishing, very healing for us. And if it is something negative, like hatred or fear, we should be able to embrace it and bring relief to it.

The third function of mindfulness is to help us look deeply into the nature of what is there; in this case, fear or anger. The nature of something means the root of that something: how this fear has been created; how this anger has manifested. Look deeply into the nature of our fear and our anger in order to see their true nature. When we understand, when we have insight into the nature of our fear and our anger, that insight will help transform our fear, our anger into positive energies.

Looking deeply helps us to recognize, to realize things that we have not realized before. In the past three years, we have been bringing groups of Israelis and Palestinians to Plum Village (where we live and practice) to support their practice. We have learned a lot from them, also. When they arrive, they always bring with them a lot of fear, a lot of anger, a lot of suspicion. They could not talk to each other, because everyone has a lot of suspicion and anger and fear in himself or herself....

The groups of Israelis and Palestinians, when they arrive, they are introduced to the practice of mindful breathing and mindful walking right away. The practice helps to generate the energy of mindfulness so they can recognize and embrace their fear, their anger, their suspicion, their despair. We do it together with the support of the International Community of Meditation. The Jews and Palestinians practice sitting together, eating mindfully and silently together, walking together, breathing together for a number of days -- seven days, eight days, nine days. Every day they listen to a Dharma talk in order to receive the teachings on how to do the practice of mindfully recognizing their fear, their anger, their suspicion and their despair, how to embrace them and how to treat them with nonviolence and non-duality.

About ten days are necessary for each of them to be able to see more clearly, because anger and fear prevent us from seeing things clearly, especially when anger or fear has become collective. When anger has become collective, when fear has become collective, it's extremely dangerous for our nation and for the world. That is why we should practice not only as individuals but also as communities, as nations.

With the support of the international community, the Jews and the Palestinians are able to come down, and now they are assisted in the practice of listening deeply with compassion to the other groups. Listening to our own suffering, our own fear, and our own anger is the first thing we have to do as a person and as a community. After that, when we have some insight about the roots of our fear, our anger, our despair, then we can listen to other groups of people. While listening, you have to practice mindful breathing in order to keep calm, to maintain compassion in you, because that practice of deep listening is also called the practice of compassionate listening. Compassionate listening means to listen with one purpose: helping the other side, the other person to express himself or herself and to get relief. You don't listen to criticize. You just listen in order to give the other person a chance to empty his heart; to empty her heart in order to get relief.

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When you can listen like that for one hour to the other person, he or she will get relief. During the whole time of listening, you keep your practice of mindful breathing, in order to maintain compassion. If these two things do not exist during the time of listening, your listening will not have a good effect. Even if the other side says things that are full of wrong perceptions, blaming and judgment, you are still capable of listening with compassion. This is extremely important. And that is possible only with the practice of mindful breathing and the maintaining of compassion during the whole time of listening. We have to train ourselves for at least one week in order to be able to do it and to help our beloved one get relief.

When you are the person who speaks, you practice gentle speech, loving speech. You have the right, and you have a duty to tell the other group of people, the other person, what is in your heart. But you have to use the kind of language that can convey your feelings, that can convey your insights, your suffering to the other person; namely, the language of love and kindness. If you do not use the language of love and kindness, then you touch off the energy of anger and hatred in the other person, and he or she will not be able to listen to you. That is why it is very important to practice loving speech, gentle speech. That is the subject of the fourth mindfulness training in the Buddhist tradition.

So, with the assistance and the support of the Plum Village community, the two groups sit down and practice listening to each other and using gentle speech. It works very well always. Listening like that in the presence of many, many other practitioners, you realize-- maybe for the first time-- that on the other side they are human beings also, and they have already suffered very deeply because of anger, of hatred, of violence, of despair. The moment that you realize they are human beings who have suffered deeply also, compassion begins to arise in your heart, and now you are able to look at them with the eyes of compassion. You have become a Bodhisattva, capable of using the eyes of compassion in order to look at other living human beings.

Fourteen days or twenty-one days can produce a miracle. There are people who say, after having been in Plum Village, "I believe that peace is possible in the Middle East." Both groups want to bring home the practice; to organize sessions of practice among friends. Now they have set up Sanghas, communities of practice--a little bit everywhere in the Middle East. And they want to maintain their practice, because their practice helped them maintain compassion and insight, [and allowed them] not to be drowned in the ocean of despair.

It is our conviction that if their leaders come together and practice the same kind of practice, they will be able to bring peace and reconciliation to the Middle East. If we practice, if we organize a peace conference supported by many nations, and if we organize so that the two parties have a chance to try this kind of practice, then the peace conference will bring a wonderful result. Because if you still have a lot of anger, a lot of suspicion, a lot of hatred, it would be extremely difficult for you to come to an agreement that will really bring peace and well-being to the two nations, the two people.

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I would like to tell you the story of a couple who live in California. They have practiced in this mindful way. The lady, who is a Catholic, wanted to commit suicide, because she had suffered so much. There was no joy in her life anymore. Her husband was like a bomb, ready to explode at any time. He had a lot of anger, a lot of bitterness, a lot of frustration, a lot of violence in him. The three children, who attended university, were very afraid of coming close to their father. Their father would get angry at anything--would explode at any time. He believed that his wife and his three children were boycotting him, and that made his anger and frustration grow bigger and bigger every day.

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The lady had a friend, a Buddhist practitioner, who was aware of her situation, and who had tried to persuade her to listen to a Dharma talk given by her teacher. The title of the Dharma talk, in the form of a cassette tape, is "How to Diffuse a Bomb." When you contain within yourself too much violence, too much anger, you become very tense. You become like a bomb. You suffer very much, and you spill your suffering all over the people who live with you, and people are afraid of you. They don't want to approach you, and then you believe that everyone is boycotting you. You are extremely lonely.

The Buddhist lady believed that if her friend listened to the Dharma talk, she would know how to help diffuse the bomb in her husband. But that lady considered herself a Catholic. She said, "I am a Catholic. Why should I listen to this kind of stuff?"

But the morning that [the lady] called and announced that she was going to die, her Buddhist friend asked her to come over right away. She wanted to see her for the last time, and this time she tried her best to convince the lady to listen to the talk. She said, "You always said that I am your best friend, and the only thing I ask you to do is to listen to the Dharma talk of my teacher. I don't think that you are truly my friend." That challenge helped. The lady told herself, "Now, I am going to die. Why don't I satisfy the person I consider to be my friend." So she agreed to listen to the Dharma talk.

The Buddhist lady withdrew in order to allow her friend to be alone in the living room, and she began to listen to the cassette tape. As she listened to the Dharma talk, insight came to her. She recognized the fact that the suffering in her had not been created only by her husband, but by herself. And the suffering in her husband had not been created by her husband alone, but she had participated in creating the suffering in him. When she listened to the Dharma talk, she realized that in the last six years, she never used the kind of language that is called loving speech. She always blamed him. She always used a very sour language, full of blaming and judgment. She realized she had made the situation worse every day, and she felt that she was partly responsible for her own suffering and the suffering of her husband.



When you suffer, you have the tendency to blame the other person as the only source of your suffering. You don't recognize that you are responsible to some extent for your suffering, and you have also created the suffering of the other person. That was her insight during the time that she listened to the talk, and her heart opened, and for the first time in so many years, she felt sorry. She felt compassion for herself and for her husband.

She was animated, inspired by the idea of going home and helping her husband by practicing listening deeply, listening with compassion. She became very enthusiastic. But her Buddhist friend said, "No, my friend. You are still very weak. You have to train yourself at least one week in order to be able to do so.

Because, if you listen to him, and if his language is full of blaming and wrong perceptions, you will interrupt him and spoil everything. You have to train yourself first. Let me propose to you this. My teacher is coming from France, and he is going to offer in the Bay area two retreats, one for the Vietnamese-speaking people and one for the English-speaking people. Why don't you sign up for the first retreat?"

The Catholic lady accepted, and during the six-day retreat, she practiced with all her heart, because for her it was a matter of life and death. That is why she invested herself entirely into the practice. She learned how to breathe, how to walk, how to embrace the suffering in her, how to use the kind of loving speech that will be able to open the heart of her husband. And with the support of other practitioners, she went very deeply into the practice.

The night that she came home, she put into practice what she had learned on the retreat. She was very silent that night, practicing mindful breathing, mindful walking. And, finally, she came and sat down close to [her husband], and she began to speak. She said, "My husband, I know that you have suffered terribly during the past six or seven years. I have not been able to help you, and I have made the situation worse. I am sorry. I did not know how to listen to you. I didn't know what was going on in your heart, in your mind. I was blind. I was unable to see. And that is why I have made the situation worse. I didn't want you to suffer. I wanted you to be happy, but because I did not know how, I have made the situation worse. So, please, my husband, please help me. Please tell me what is in your heart. I want to understand so that I will not repeat the unskillful things I have done.

I am very sorry. You have to help me; alone I cannot change."

She was very surprised to see him begin to cry like a little boy. Seeing that, she knew that the door of communication had opened. So she practiced mindful breathing, deeply, and she insisted, "Please, my husband, please tell me what is in your heart. I will try to listen. I will try to understand. I want you to be happy.

I don't want you to suffer."

It turned out, that that night was a very healing night for both of them. She was very successful in her practice of deep listening and using loving speech, and she was able to restore communication. She was able to convince him to sign up for the second retreat of mindfulness. And during the last day of the second retreat, he stood up and he introduced his wife as a bodhisattva. (A bodhisattva in Buddhism means an enlightened being that is able to help other people to be enlightened, also.)

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It is my conviction that the practice of the Israeli and Palestinian groups, the practice of that couple in California can be applied as the practice in the international political scenery. The principle of the practice is to go home to yourself and listen to your own suffering and raise your own suffering and despair and fear. That is what I proposed last year after 9/11. Two days after the 9/11 event, I spoke to four thousand people in Brooklyn.

I proposed that America should go back to herself, practicing mindful breathing and embracing the pain, the suffering, the fear, the anger, and listening to the suffering of America. On the 25th of September that year, I spoke at the Riverside Church in New York City with Ambassador Andrew Young.

We went to Ground Zero the day after, and I again proposed that [America] should embrace this practice of going home to herself, listening to her own suffering; that she must bring relief to herself before she can do something to help the situation in the world.

In the United States of America, there are people-- sections of the population-- who feel that they are victims of social injustice and discrimination. They feel that they have never been listened to. Suffering is there in America, and America has to practice listening to her own pain and suffering. This is the first step. There are vast resources of peace in this country.

There are those of us in America who have the capacity to listen deeply and with compassion to the suffering of America. We should be able to look around, to identify them, and to invite them to come in order to form a parliament for deep listening, a kind of counsel of sages, in order to practice listening to the suffering of our own nation, of our own people.

Then we should be able to invite those people who have felt that they're victims of social injustice and discrimination to come in order to tell us about their suffering. We should have people who come and help them to practice calming, embracing their suffering, help them use the kind of language that can convey the suffering, the feeling within themselves, exactly like in the case of that couple,

exactly like in the case of the Palestinians and Israelis in Plum Village.....  
America can act compassionately within her frontiers in order to heal the wounds, to mend the wounds within America first. This is the first step. We cannot do the second step before we can make the first step.

If you want to help other countries, other groups of people like Afghanistan and the others, we have to help ourselves first. All of us know that this has to begin with one's self. So, acting with compassion and wisdom within our own frontiers is the first step.

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Then bringing that practice into the international levels, America can ask other nations to help create sessions of deep listening where America can participate. Around the world there are those who are capable of being compassionate, of being attentive, of being able to listen deeply. You shall invite them to come and listen. Other groups who believe that they have been victims of injustice, that they are mistreated by America and other big nations, they are invited to come and to tell the world about their suffering, their fear, their anger.

If we have not been able to listen to our fear, our anger, we cannot listen and understand the fear and the anger of other nations and people. Then there are those of us who can come as volunteers to help these people to breathe, to walk, to calm down, to use the kind of language that can convey what is deep in their heart.

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Looking deeply, we realize that hate, violence, anger, and terrorism are born from wrong perceptions. [Others] may have wrong perceptions of themselves, and they may have wrong perceptions of us, and they have acted on the basis of these wrong perceptions. In order for them not to continue, the only way is to help them remove these wrong perceptions of themselves and of us, and that work cannot be done by the Army.

That work cannot be done by bombs and guns. That can only be done with the practice of deep listening, compassionate listening, and loving speech. We have to support our political leaders in this practice.

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One of the deepest teachings given by Buddha is that you should not be too sure of your perceptions. You have to practice looking deeply in order not to be fooled by your perceptions. If you are a doctor, you have to be very careful. Even if you are sure, check again. This kind of practice should be applied in our political life also.

The mass media has the duty of informing the people about what is happening. Journalists, reporters should be able to be calm, not to be carried away by their emotions, their feelings, their anger, their despair, in order to report well, to reflect the situation with more accuracy.

Our political leaders have to train themselves in order not to be carried away by fear, by anger. They should be able to retain their lucidity for the sake of the nation and of the world. When fear and anger has become collective, the situation becomes extremely dangerous for everyone. That is why we have to bring a spiritual dimension to our political life.

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You have elected your government. You have elected your House of Representatives and your Senate. You should continue to support them. You should continue to give them the kind of information that helps them correct their poor perceptions. The situation of our country, of our world, is [too important] to be entrusted only to politicians.

As a mother, as a father, as a school teacher, as a doctor, you have to practice in order to remain calm, in order to look deeply, in order to understand, and you have to convey your insight, your compassion to your elected people. You have to practice. We cannot leave the matter only to our politicians.

In Buddhist psychology, we speak of consciousness in terms of seeds. In the lower level, lower layer of our consciousness, there is a part that is called store consciousness. Store consciousness is the place where all the seeds of mental formations are preserved. There is a seed of fear; there is a seed of anger; there is a seed of despair; there is a seed of peace; there is a seed of joy; there is a seed of loving kindness--all the good seeds and all the negative seeds that have been transmitted to us by our ancestors, our parents.

It depends on the environment where we live, [but] such seeds can be watered several times a day. Our children watch television three hours a day or even more. And during the time they watch television, their seed of fear, of anger, of craving may be watered, and they continue to grow. We have to create; we have to produce television programs that are able to water the seed of compassion, joy, peace, and loving kindness.

That is why mindful consumption is very important. When you read a magazine, you consume. When you listen to music, you consume. When we begin a conversation, we consume, because a conversation can also be highly toxic. If a man or a woman is full of fear, of despair, of hatred, and if we listen to him or to her for an hour, the poisons will penetrate into store consciousness, and make the seed of fear and anger grow very quickly.

That is why the practice of mindful consumption, including consumption of conversation, is very crucial for self-protection, for the protection of our family and society.

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We should be able to stop violence and to take up the path of reconciliation and peace. This is possible. I have the conviction that America has enough wisdom and courage and compassion in order to pick up that path of reconciliation and healing.

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When we listen to the other person, to the other group of persons, you get insight about their suffering, their difficulty, their fear, and their anger. And at the same time, you realize that we do have wrong perceptions also. We have done, we have said things that have created misunderstanding. We have not understood us completely. We have not understood them completely. We vow to practice in order to have a better understanding of ourselves and of them so that our action will be in the direction of peace.

America will learn a lot with the practice of deep listening and compassionate listening. The insights she will get will be able to serve as the ground for repairing the damage she has done to herself in America and she has done in other parts of the world. She will be able to help remove the wrong perceptions of the people outside of America, about America, and about themselves.

It is my conviction that [she must work to] remove wrong perceptions--for that is the base, the foundation of hatred and violence and terrorism. That work cannot be done by the bombs. It should be done by the practice of deep listening, compassionate listening, and loving speech.

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My dear friends, peace is not something we can only hope for. Peace is something we can contemplate in our daily life by our practice of mindful breathing, mindful walking, embracing our fear, our anger, producing the energy of understanding and compassion. And with that element of peace in us, we should be able to support our government, our Congress. And let us remember that peace is in our hands. We can do something for peace every day. Let us practice as individuals. Let us practice as communities, as Sanghas, and let us give peace a chance.

# What is Your Listening Style?

by Jo Condrill

Thursday, July 07, 2005

Effective communication is the mark of an achiever. How well you articulate your message is only one measure. Your listening style and approach are equally important. Do you know your style?

Experts estimate that people filter out or change the intended meaning of what they hear in 70 percent of communications. The biggest contributing factor to miscommunication is using a listening approach that is not appropriate for either the environment or for the message being communicated. Effective listeners consider not only their own intentions, but also the intentions of the speaker.

Because our listening styles reflect our unspoken values and motivations, we often assume that others will have listening styles that are similar to our own. When others do not share our style, the chances of a miscommunication significantly increase. Even more important, we frequently misinterpret the real meaning of this miscommunication. Given your listening style, you may expect others to place as much value on emotional expression as you do. Consequently, you may assume that others are attentive to emotional cues and understand the unspoken feelings that you might be communicating as a speaker. When others do not acknowledge such cues, you may interpret their actions as uncaring or indifferent. You should be aware that those who have a non-empathic manner of interaction may demonstrate appreciation, trust, or affection in a more sober fashion than you typically expect.

Effective communication is much more than learning how to express your thoughts; it is also learning how to adapt your listening style in varying situations. You can do this when you know what your listening style is. Your style is a way of listening that comes most naturally to you. Your listening approach is a situational behavior. We get into trouble when we use a listening approach that is inappropriate for the situation but in keeping with our listening style.

One participant in a Listening seminar shared her enlightenment with the group. After completing the Profile, she said, she realized that when communicating with her husband at home she was using the same evaluative listening style that she used at work.

She was critiquing the events he told her about rather simply enjoying the conversation in an appreciative manner. He was sharing events with her and not asking how he could have acted more effectively. She stated that there was a marked improvement in their relationship once she changed her listening approach.

The Personal Listening Profile developed by Inscape Publishing, Inc. helps individuals determine their preferred listening style. It also provides a gap analysis that displays the interaction between different listening approaches and different message goals and then homes in on your specific strengths and challenges.

In my own Personal Listening Profile feedback, I was cautioned that 'Because you are a highly comprehensive listener, you may assume that others are as focused on the big picture as you are. Consequently, your speaking and listening may gravitate toward the abstract or conceptual. Sometimes your listeners will be searching for concrete details while you are concerned with communicating the underlying ideas that give those details meaning.' It went on to express my 'growth areas,' weaknesses, in Appreciative and Evaluative listening approaches.

The Personal Listening Profile(R) is a highly reliable instrument that can be used with confidence. Order and complete the Profile today. Begin now to fill the gaps in your communication effectiveness.

## SELF – ASSESSMENT of your Listening Style

Dr. Joan C. Curtis

We've heard of leadership styles and communication styles. Have you ever wondered about your listening style? Most self-assessments do not measure how we listen. Yet, we all recognize how important listening is to communication. Many people say that listening ranks much higher than actual discourse ability.

When I created the Say It Just Right model of communication, I included style analysis. For people to communicate well with one another, they need to not only understand their own style preferences, but the style preferences of the other person. Nonetheless, I considered communication style without considering listening style. The more I work with the model and tweak it, the more I realize that listening style plays as important a role in our communication.

So, how can we determine our listening style? Just like the best way to learn your leadership or communication style is by observation, the same is true with listening. Furthermore, if you tend to communicate boldly, you'll tend to be a bold listener. Hints about the way you listen exist within your personality. Here are some examples. See if you see yourself described below.

Four styles of listening:

1. **Compassionate Listener.** This person stops whatever he is doing, turns, faces the communicator and gives that person complete attention. The Compassionate Listener watches both verbal and nonverbal messages to understand what the speaker is saying beyond the words. This person rarely turns away from a speaker and rarely talks about himself. If you've experienced a Compassionate Listener, you know that you walk away from the experience feeling heard, respected and energized.
2. **Too Busy to Listen Listener.** This person never stops doing things. Their hands busily scurry across the computer key board, straighten up the house, fiddle with the latest puzzle. The Too Busy to Listen Listener is in a state of constant action. They tell others they cannot sit still. Whenever someone approaches them with something to say, this person thinks, "How long will this take?" Sometimes they ask the other person to come back when things slow down (which is when?). They rarely give the other person full attention because they are multi-tasking. Often messages which are shared get confused in the translation.
3. **Trees for Forrest Listener.** Here's a listener who hears words and not meaning. They see the non-verbals but do not connect with them. Instead the Trees for Forrest Listener points out, "But, you said you were happy." The other person may have made that statement with eyes downcast and in a monotone voice. The Trees for Forrest Listener spends time "listening," but feels relieved when the person finishes



whatever they came to say. They tend to point out discrepancies in the conversation—”A few minutes ago you said you wanted more responsibility, but now you say you’re overwhelmed.” Or they try to laser the conversation, “What exactly did you come to talk to me about?”

4. The It’s Me Listener. This person thinks himself a great listener. They love being with other people so they believe they are good at connecting. The problem with their listening is they get in their own way. The It’s Me Listener wants to tell the listener all about themselves and their experiences. Whenever the conversation shifts, the It’s Me Listener changes the subject to whatever happened to him. Usually the conversation ends with each person wondering what the point of the initial discussion was in the first place.

Think about yourself. Are you a Compassionate Listener, a Too Busy to Listen Listener, Trees for Forrest Listener or an It’s Me Listener. Next time someone says, “Have you got a minute?” pay attention to your own listening style. You may surprise yourself!

To find out how good a listener you are, take this free assessment.  
<http://www.totalcommunicationscoach.com/how-good-a-listener-are-you.htm>

#### **Author's Bio**

Dr. Curtis is CEO of Total Communications Coaching. She's been a leadership consultant for over 20 years and is a communication and business coach. Her clients include executives in a variety of industry. Find out more at [TotalCommunicationsCoach.com](http://TotalCommunicationsCoach.com)

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*Current ad for a video/DVD that teaches employees to listen*

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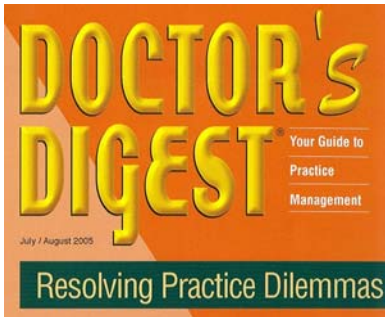
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**Training Points:**

- How to utilize three basic rules--Stop, Think, Listen--to improve communications
- How to ask questions and get the right message
- How to recognize and solve common listening problems



## RESOLVING PRACTICE DILEMMAS

# Dealing With Breakdowns in Communication

**O**ne day Nancy Radcliff, R.N., was shadowing an orthopedist in his office. Ms. Radcliff, director of customer service for the Bronson Customer Service Institute at Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, Mich., is frequently hired by corporations, hospitals and physicians to diagnose and cure their communication problems, which are often in critical condition.

**Communication problems** between physicians and their staff, patients and colleagues can damage hard-earned reputations and lead to lawsuits. Lack of communication is often the culprit behind high staff turnover, patient dissatisfaction and plunging profits. Physicians can resolve many issues by simply replacing bad habits with effective communication strategies that create harmony in the workplace.

When the physician and Ms. Radcliff walked into the exam room, a couple was holding hands. The wife was the patient, but the physician addressed only the husband. The doctor viewed her X-ray on a light board, discussed her condition with his back turned toward them, then walked out of the room adding, "We need another X-ray."

"I was absolutely astounded—flabbergasted," recalls Ms. Radcliff. "This physician didn't have any concept of what his communication skills were. He had a sense

he was not communicating well only because [he was involved in] lawsuits."

Communication problems between physicians and their staff, patients and colleagues are nothing new. Besides lawsuits, poor communication can seriously damage hard-earned reputations and is often the culprit behind high staff turnover, patient dissatisfaction and plunging profits.

A handful of physicians are sharpening their communication skills at the National Institute of Whole Health in Wellesley, Mass. The organization provides continuing education for medical professionals in “whole-person healthcare,” explains its director, Georgianna Donadio, Ph.D.

She says that one of the biggest patient complaints is that physicians and other healthcare providers typically don’t “communicate authentically” or show respect. For example, she says, when you sit in an exam room with patients, are you really lis-

Continues on next page . . .

tening to them or are you thinking about your stockbroker or about going to Bermuda over the weekend or what you'll eat for lunch? Are you "present" to that person and actually giving him or her your time and paying attention to the task at hand?

Dr. Donadio says that 70 percent of information is communicated through nonverbal means. Patients can sense when you're not present through a variety of verbal and nonverbal cues, such as lack of eye contact, leg shaking, tone of voice, facial expression and hand gestures. Then there is the distraction factor—how many times do you answer phone calls or walk out of the exam room during a patient encounter?

"Clear your mind, clear out all the nonsense that's not related to that particular person," Dr. Donadio says. "Give them what they paid for, and you'll get back 10 times in good will, recommendations and referrals. The biggest and most successful practices in the U.S. are all word-of-mouth referrals. We know that's a fact, yet somehow we don't think we have to be mindful of how people are experiencing our care."

The organization conducted a four-year trial study between 1998 and 2002. Fifty patients, who were labeled noncompliant and suffered from multiple pathologies ranging from cardiac disease and obesity to alcoholism, were enrolled in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Department at Union Hospital in Lynn, Mass. Patients were evaluated at the beginning and end of the study using SF36, a validated survey instrument that is used to measure quality of life. Six educators and six interns from the New England School of Whole Health Education participated in educating the patients at the hospital during six one-on-one sessions.

The study found that these patients performed significantly better than the control group after just six months. There was an 11-percent improvement in patients sharing their feelings, a 6-percent improvement relating to stress, 22-percent improvement in their perception of their tendency to get sick compared with others, a 21-percent improvement in their expectations of future health decline and a 4-percent improvement in their perception of their current health status.

One participant was an alcoholic in his early 50s who suffered from diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Several months into the study, Dr. Donadio says, he ran into his doctor in the hospital's

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hallway; he had not seen this physician since he was enrolled in the study.

"His doctor didn't recognize him," she says, explaining that this man was now standing straight instead of being hunched over, had color in his face and had lost weight. When asked what had happened to him, the man said, 'Finally I got somebody to tell my story to. She listens.' The doctor was transformed."

The golden rule that the National Institute of Whole Health teaches is that nobody likes to be told what to do. Patients must be engaged and invited into the process of managing their health-care. In order for that to occur, physicians must create a level playing field that involves shared decision-making and trust patients' intelligence and intuition when it comes to their own bodies. She says that many physicians do not ask their patients

### **Patients Uneasy About Confronting Care Providers: Study**

A recent study suggests that patients often play an unwitting role in bringing about medical mistakes by not confronting their healthcare practitioners when they have concerns about their care.

The study, conducted by VitalSmarts, an international company that provides leadership training and consulting services, identified patients who had recently encountered problems from feeling mistreated by healthcare practitioners to feeling worried that their care provider was making a significant mistake. It found that patients usually say nothing about their concerns, and their silence puts them at risk for significant personal harm.

"Patients often find themselves in a quandary, worrying that their healthcare professional is acting on poor information," says Joseph Grenny, author of the study and president of VitalSmarts. "The patients feel that they have to choose between being respectful and sharing their concerns. Given these two choices, they don't speak up."

The survey found the following:

- Fewer than half of patients spoke up when the caregiver was unclear about the diagnosis, treatment options or next steps.
- One in five of these people had suffered "substantial" health problems as a result of not speaking up.
- When patients believed that the care provider was making a medication error, they were more inclined to speak up, yet more than a third did not.

what they believe may be wrong with them.

Over a nearly 30-year span—from 1977 to 2005—the organization surveyed roughly 100,000 patients in the New England area and asked them that same question: What do you think may be wrong with you? The results found that 93 percent of the time, patients had accurately diagnosed their condition.

By asking that question to patients, Dr. Donadio says, physicians can begin to relate to patients as one human being to another. “Their eyes will brighten up, and they’ll think you’re pretty terrific because you’ve engaged them in shared decision-making,” she says. “How powerful is that?”

**Is the patient** a single mother working two jobs to support a large family? If so, advising her to start an exercise routine, avoid starchy foods and eat fruits and veggies would be a waste of time. The patient would feel as if the doctor doesn’t understand anything about her and “blow off” anything else that’s suggested.