



Compassionate Listening

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If You Forget by Rob Fisher

If you forget how beautiful you are
I will remember

I will remember your barefoot connection to the earth,
The risks you have taken.
And the compassion in your heart

I will remember the courage of your questions.
And the tiny wrinkles that make your bright and shining eyes
So welcoming.

I will remember how you shine in your enthusiasm,
Your delicate embarrassment,
The passion and serious intensity
Behind your words.
If you forget,
Come with me.
There is a path I know
High up on the mountain

And deep in the core of the rich black earth
Where we can drink together
From the pool of your tears,
And listen as the mountains echo
With the sound of your laughter

If you forget,
I will taste,
One more time
The deep dark sweetness of your soul,
That wonderful essence that belongs only to you.

If you are tired,
Come rest in the warmth of my hands
and I will whisper
Stories of your greatness
in your ears.

Oh, how I am intoxicated by the flavors of your soul.

Objectives

- Define the differences between reflective, sympathetic, empathetic and compassionate listening
- List the components of compassionate listening
- List the obstacles and barriers that affect our ability to listen compassionately
- Describe the components of Embodied Compassionate Listening
- Engage in experiential breakout rooms to practice Embodied Compassionate Listening.
- Participate in guided compassionate listening meditation, in listening to oneself.

What Is My Intention?

- **Why am I here?**
- **Why am I really here?**
- **Why am I really, really here?**

Compassionately Listening to Oneself

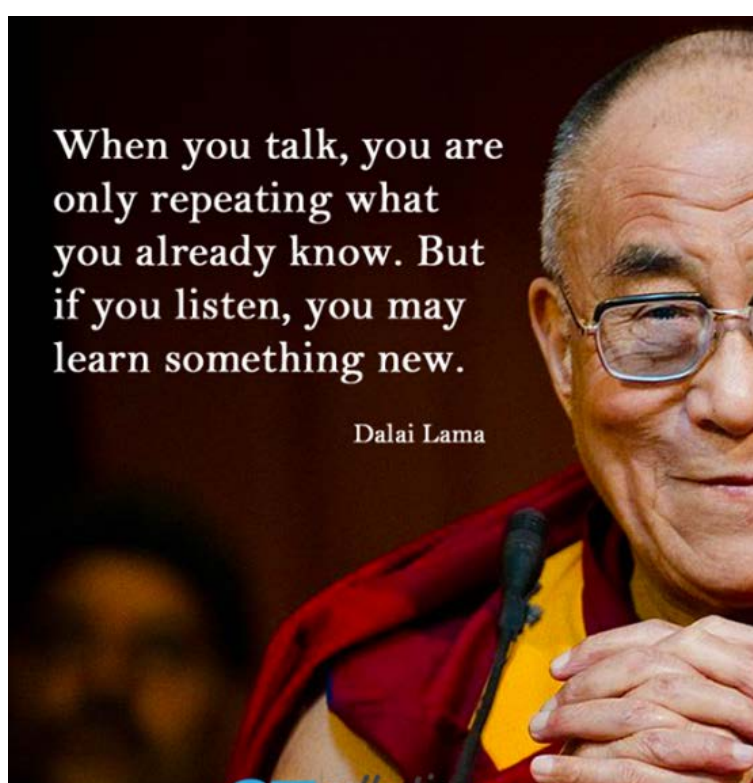
Break-Out Room

Sharing Our Intentions

What were the qualities of the person who listened to me?

How did I feel before the conversation, and how did I feel after?

What qualities made the difference?



When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.

Dalai Lama

The word
LISTEN
contains
the same letters
as the word
SILENT.

— Alfred Brendel



Assessing Active Listening Skills

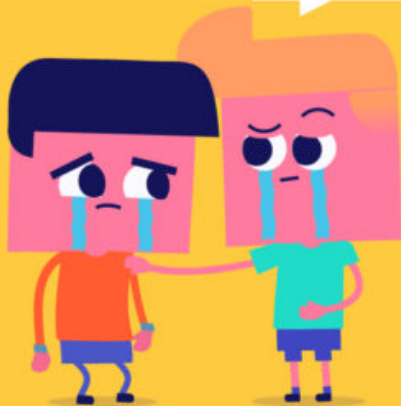
Always, Usually, Occasionally, Never

1. I allow the speaker to finish before I begin speaking.
2. I observe body language and use that information to help me understand the speaker's message.
3. I make an effort to be interested in the subject and speaker.
4. I do nothing else except listen when someone is speaking to me.
5. I avoid getting angry or agitated with the speaker when I disagree with him or her.
6. I tune out distractions (others, phone, emails etc.) when listening.
7. I repeat details of a conversation to make sure I understand what the speaker is saying.
8. I think about what the speaker means, not just what he or she says.
9. I actively try to retain facts and concepts from the speaker.
10. I try to understand the speaker's point of view so I may better understand the message.

<https://www.trainingcoursematerial.com/free-assessment-tools/how-good-a-listener-are-you-quiz>

EMPATHY

I've been there.



INK_

SYMPATHY

I feel so bad for you.



INKFORALL.COM

Sympathy, Empathy, Compassion- What is the Difference?

Sympathy - I can understand or imagine how you feel.

- Caring and understanding for the suffering of others
- Not always truly involved in the feeling of others
- **Sympathy says, “I understand and feel sorry for you.”**

Empathy – “I see empathy as a piece of compassion-building.” (Cindy Wigglesworth)

- The ability to actually feel, understand and experience the feelings of another person
- Putting oneself in the shoes of another
- An emotional response **and** a cognitive understanding
- **Empathy says, “I am you.”**

Source: Scott Stabile, from the “The Difference Between I’m Sorry and I’ve Been There.”

About Empathy & Sympathy



Brene Brown: Sympathy and
Empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZBTYViDPIQ>

Sympathy, Empathy Compassion- What's the Difference?

Compassion – “I feel with you and act skillfully to relieve your suffering.”

- Perceiving and connecting with another's suffering, joined with readiness to want to see the relief of suffering; a more empowered state
- Responding to suffering with understanding, patience and kindness, rather than with repulsion and fear
- Opening up to the reality of suffering and seeking its alleviation
- **Compassion says, “I am here to help relieve your suffering.”**

Compassionate Listening

“Listening creates a holy silence. When you listen generously to people, they can hear truth in themselves, often for the first time. And in the silence of listening, you can know yourself in everyone. Eventually, you may be able to hear, in everyone and beyond everyone, the unseen singing softly to itself and to you.” (Rachel Naomi Remen)



Compassionate Listening

Listening is simple, but did anyone ever promise it would be easy?

“God gave us two ears and only one mouth,” says an old Jewish proverb, “that we should listen twice as much as we speak.” (Carol Hwoschinsky)



Speak in such a way
that others love to
listen to you.

Listen in such a way
that others love to
speak to you.



Our Basic Core Needs

_____ To be safe-physically, mentally, emotionally

_____ To have food, clothing, shelter

_____ To love and be loved

_____ To belong, to bond

_____ To be connected

_____ To have purpose meaning and direction

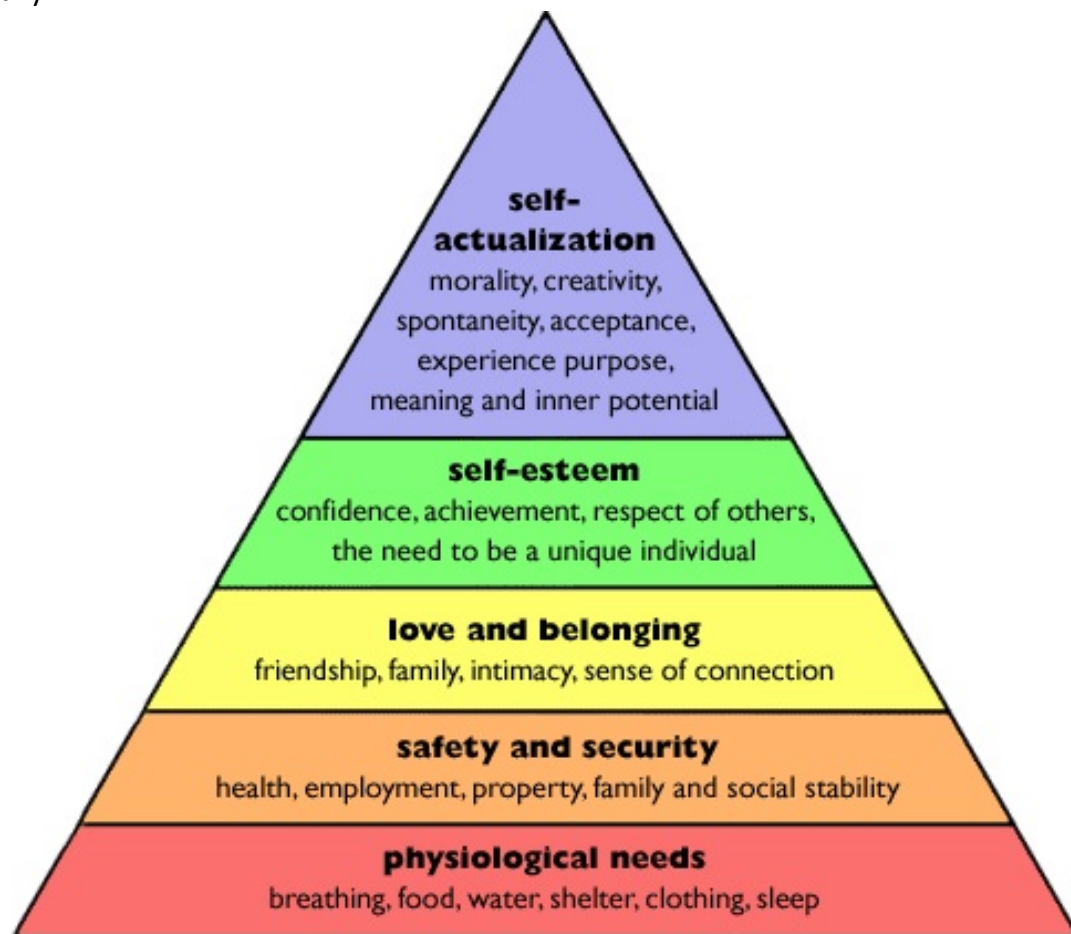
_____ To be confident and competent

_____ To be able to make decisions

_____ To have freedom

_____ To experience fulfillment

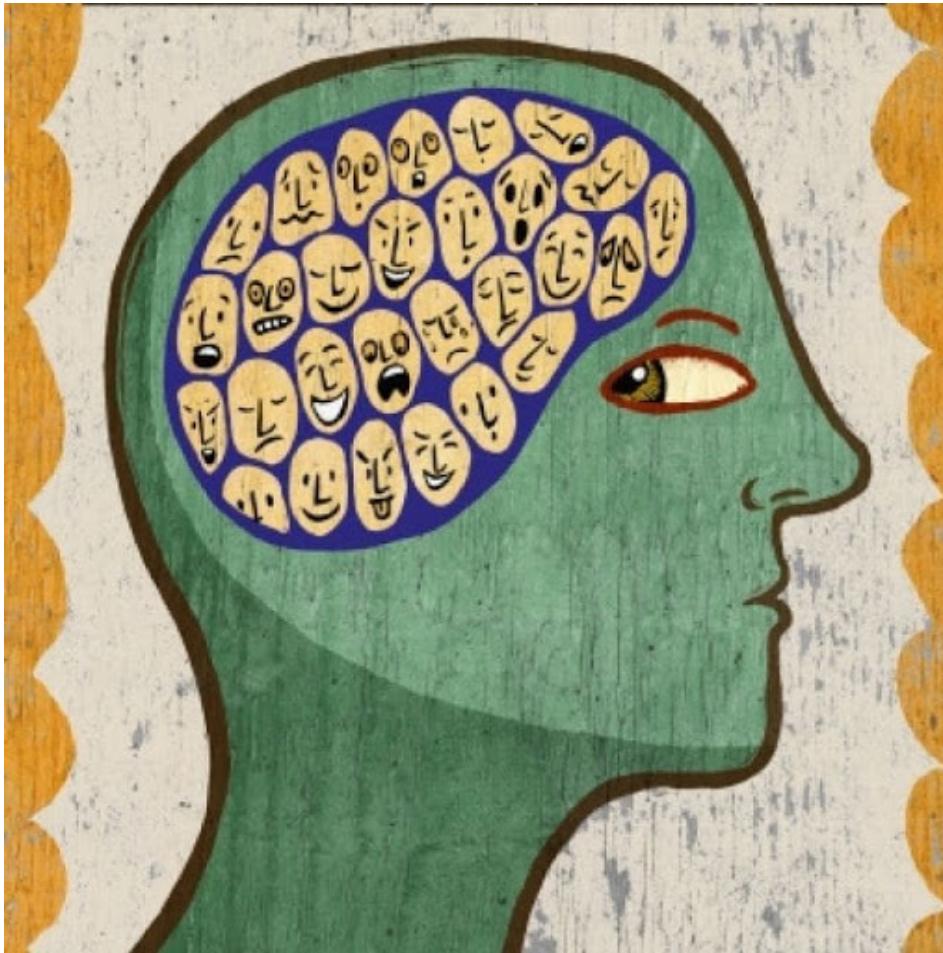
_____ To survive, thrive



Compassionate Listening



The Inner Critic

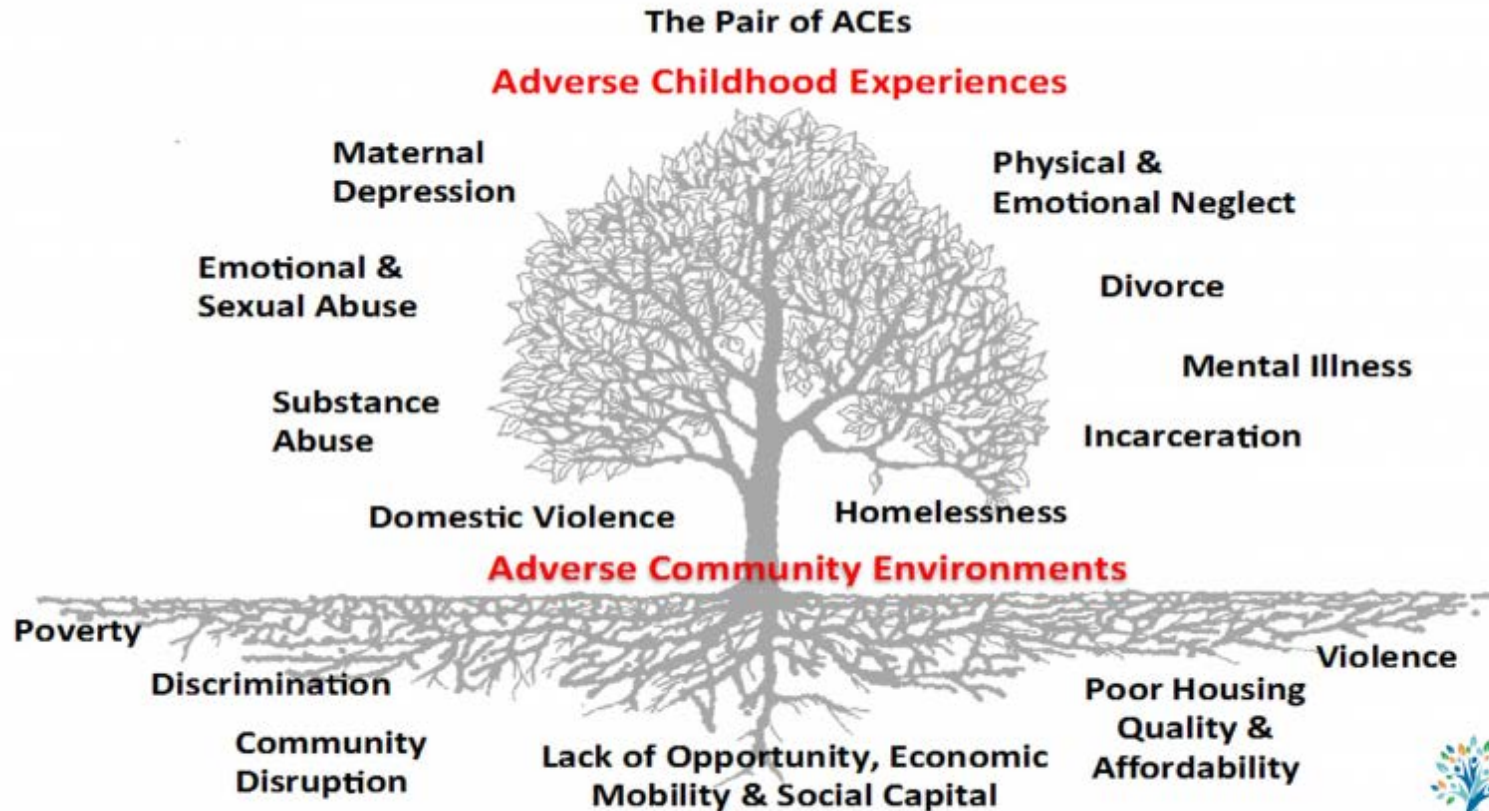


Core Wounds

- Abandonment
- Loss of love
- Loss of belonging and connection
- Loss of safety
- Abuse, physical, mental, emotional
- Insecurity
- Betrayal
- Trauma
- Shame and self-hatred
- Loss of trust
- Isolation



Core Wounds from Childhood



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We see the world not as it is, but as we are— or as we are conditioned to see it. When we open our mouths to describe what we see, we in effect describe ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms.

– Steven Covey

The Golden Buddha Story



What is Compassion?





What is Compassion?

- Compassion is a function of the heart that is loving and quivers in response to suffering and that has the capacity to respond with appropriate action. (Kate Johnson)
- Compassion is always a response to suffering. (Kelly McGonigal)
- Compassion is the AWARENESS of our own and other's suffering, the ATTITUDE that we are all one, and that it takes ACTION in choosing what we are to do about awareness and action. (Joyce Rupp)
- Compassion is not relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well, can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity. (Pema Chodron)

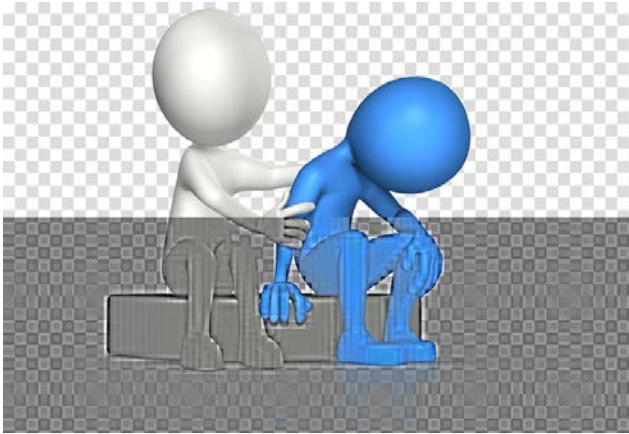
What Is Compassion?

“Compassion is recognizing the light and darkness in our shared Humanity. We connect to practicing loving kindness to ourselves and others in the face of suffering.



You have to recognize the darkness in yourself and others...
Compassion is knowing your darkness well enough that you can sit in
the dark with others...” (Brene Brown)

What is Compassion?



“Compassion can be described as letting ourselves be touched by the vulnerability and suffering that is within ourselves and all beings. The full flowering of compassion also includes action: not only do we attune to the presence of suffering, we respond to it.” (Tara Brach)

We become more and more able to meet personal and global events with embodied awareness and compassion.

Components of Compassion

Kelly McGonigal describes the Components of Compassion:

- **AWARENESS and RECOGNITION** of suffering. We see, realize someone or some community is suffering, is in distress, struggling in pain.
- **A FEELING** of concern or connection to the one or community that is suffering. We understand, care, and feel connected in some way.
- **A DESIRE** to relieve the suffering. We see the pain, feel it, care and want the person to suffer less, to relieve some of the pain and struggle. Now there is a **MOTIVATION** behind our feeling.

Components of Compassion

- A **BELIEF** that you can make a difference, a sense of “I can do something. I can help in some way, I can stay and listen even if I can’t solve it. I can do some small thing to make a difference.
- A **WILLINGNESS** to **RESPOND** and take **ACTION**. The opposite of denial, giving up, shutting down, running away or distracting oneself.
- A **WARM GLOW** of satisfaction that comes from the sense of connection you feel, feeling closer to others. A heart-warming feeling or glow that comes from a sense of knowing that you made a difference. Feeling a sense of yourself as part of the common humanity, that we all suffer and we all have something to offer.

Non-Violent Communication



“What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart.”
— Marshall B. Rosenberg, **Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life**

Our Listening Filters

- Culture and understanding
- Language barriers; different meanings for words
- Perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values
- Gender Identity
- Biases (conscious/unconscious)-ethical, political, religious etc.
- Expectations; searching for a certain outcome
- Intentions, agenda or purpose we set for listening
- Reasons for Listening-serving other or self-serving?
- Our own past experiences or projections of others
- Willingness to truly listen and care with empathy and compassion

What Is Compassionate Listening?

- Listening to another's grief or pain in a way that will reduce his or her feelings of confusion, fear, sorrow.
- Listening in an accepting and nonjudgmental way, we help the person feel comfortable, open and safe.
- Listening with an authentic desire to understand what the person is experiencing with openness, patience, emotional fortitude and one's own self-awareness.



What Is Compassionate Listening?

- Listening with your ears, eyes, and heart to multiple layers of a person's story.
- The ability to compassionately sustain connection with others in their experiences of suffering.
- Reflectively Listening for facts, feelings and values.
- Compassionately reflecting back what you heard so that you check for accuracy.
- Allowing yourself to get as close to the heart of what matters to the speaker as you can, without asking questions; avoiding analysis or interpretation or offering advice.

Fundamentals of Compassionate Listening

- Be attentive to the stated and underlying needs
- **Consciously and Mindfully** focus on your listening
- Practice reflective listening skills
- Demonstrate a caring interest
- Be authentic and sincerely interested in the speaker's well-being
- Be aware of and monitor your own emotions, thoughts, biases or judgments or opinions
- Focus on the present moment
- Be aware of speaker's native language, culture, understanding
- Reframe issue, need or situation to empower the speaker
- Trusting in the speaker's inherent basic goodness and need to be heard
- Not interrupting or attempting to fix or solve
- ***Slow down...Breathe...Be Present to the Moment....***

What Is Compassionate Listening?

- A practice that integrates cognitive awareness with the wisdom of the heart and body.
- A practice that helps people access the wisdom of the heart for the sake of bringing greater peace and healing into their relationship with themselves and others.
- A practice that creates the conditions that enables others to discover their own truth and trust their own wisdom to guide them through life's challenges. (Andrea S. Cohen)

Source: @ 2022 THE COMPASSIONATE LISTENING PROJECT susanpartnow@gmail.com
WWW.COMPASSIONATELISTENING.ORG

What Is Compassionate Listening?

In listening deeply to one another, our hearts assist us *to hear the values underneath the words, rhetoric, or strongly held positions*. When we listen deeply and can reflect the values that we hear, we connect to the wholeness in the other.

BEAUTY COMPASSION COMMUNITY CONNECTION COOPERATION COURAGE

CREATIVITY EQUALITY FAITH FAMILY FRIENDSHIP FREEDOM GENEROSITY JUSTICE

GOODWILL GRATITUDE HARMONY HUMOR INCLUSIVENESS LOVE ORDER PATIENCE

PEACE RESPECT SERVICE SIMPLICITY TRUST UNDERSTANDING WISDOM

Five Core Practices of Compassionate Listening

1. Cultivating Compassion
2. Developing the Fair Witness
3. Respecting Self and Others
4. Listening with the Heart
5. Speaking from the Heart

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Cultivating Compassion

- Anchor in your own heart and essence and connect to another.
- Cultivate compassion for yourself.
- Find the feelings of the other within you and allow that to guide an atmosphere of connection/healing.
- Experience and express gratitude and appreciation for yourself and others.
- Willingness to step into another's shoes- seeing and feeling the world from their perspective to the extent that we can.
- Practice forgiveness of yourself and of others.
- Engage in on-going personal work to heal your own wounds.

Developing Fair Witness-Non-Judgment

- Build capacity to stay centered in the “fire” of intense interactions or strong emotion.
- Notice, unpack and contain your own triggers-self exploration.
- Look at a situation objectively by “going to the balcony”, considering each person’s role and stepping into their shoes to see their perspective.
- Suspend judgment of yourself and others.
- Distinguish the impact of someone’s words or actions from their intention.
- Use compassionate language that reflects non-judgment when asking questions or providing feedback to others.
- Seek information and experiences that expand your open-mindedness and increase your capacity to hold complexity and ambiguity.
- Maintain a process of self-exploration to enhance your awareness and discern the voice of deep wisdom from the field of inner chatter.

Respecting Self and Others

- Resist giving advice unless asked.
- Trust each person's ability to solve his or her own problems (stay out of the rescue/drama triangle).
- Discern how your mental and emotional state impacts the speaker.
- Practice self-care and take responsibility for your emotional well-being.
- Be respectful of people's differing tolerance levels and capacity for managing conflict.
- Hold the intention to "do no harm."
- Take responsibility: "I am part of what is unfolding, not separate from it." Welcome connection, yet set respectful limits, akin to creating a healthy membrane between yourself and another.

Source: @ 2022 THE COMPASSIONATE LISTENING PROJECT susanpartnow@gmail.com

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Listening With the Heart

- Anchor in the heart when listening for the deeper qualities beneath the stories we hear.
- Listening with the heart, whether to ourselves or another person, opens doorways to deeper understanding.
- Quiet one's mind in order to be fully present to others, genuinely seeking to know who they are, what they value and the experiences that motivate their perspective.
- Stay grounded in one's body and mindfully present to ourselves and another.
- Create spaciousness to manage the tension created by a multiplicity of views and feelings.
- Offer listening as a gift, choosing to keep one's opinions, stories and interpretations out of the way.

Speaking from the Heart

- Anchor one's energy in the heart when seeking words of understanding and connection.
- Be courageous in giving voice to what has truth and meaning—all for the sake of promoting healing.
- Use language that reflects one's ability to connect to the wholeness of the other.
- Use language that reflects a healing intention, rather than words of blame or judgement that may activate another's defenses.
- Identify and capture in words underlying needs and feelings.
- Use “reflective listening” effectively—facts, feelings and values.

“The Heart is Powerful”

- The heart contain approximately 40,000 neural cells.
- With its own brain center and neural cells, the heart is a mechanism within us that receives and processes information.
- It is estimated that 60-65% of the hearts cells are neural cells.
- The heart sends many more messages to the brain than the brain sends to the heart.
- Entrainment- our brain’s rhythms naturally synchronize to our heart’s rhythms.
- Our brains are wired to mirror the feelings in another’s brain.
- Often without our noticing, we resonate with each other’s emotional states.
- Compassion, appreciation, kindness-have been shown to have positive impacts upon our physical, emotional and mental health and well-being.

Source: Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening.
Andrea Cohen with Leah Green and Susan Partnow. 2017.

Compassionate Inquiry

Skilled inquiry-encourages one to go more deeply...explore new territory for themselves...rather than holding to their familiar narrative.

As listener, don't ask "Why?" out of your own curiosity.

One can say:

- Could you say more about that?
- Is there anything else?
- What was it like for you?
- Can you help me understand?
- What's your highest vision for what this situation might look like if you are able to move beyond where it is?
- Would you like to try an experiment? What would happen if you did or felt differently? What would that be like?

Thich Nhat Han and Deep Compassionate Listening

- The purpose: to help another person empty his or her heart.
- Helps relieve the pain that often clouds perception.
- When people feel heard, validated and understood, they are better able to figure out solutions on their own.
- Creates emotional resonance and calms the nervous system.
- Creates a state of optimal learning-open and receptive, trusting, calm, alert.

Dan Siegel- this is the state of **“feeling felt”**

optimal space of feeling valued and respected

Thich Nhat Hanh- On Listening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyUxYflkhzo>



Dear friends, dear people, I know that you suffer a lot. I have not understood enough of your difficulties and suffering. It's not our intention to make you suffer more. It is opposite. So please tell us about your suffering, your difficulties. I'm eager to learn, to understand."

Compassionate Listening- Awareness of Being Present

Quality of your Presence: Break out Room Exercise

- How comfortable are you when you are face to face with another person?
- Do you give a person eye contact or is this difficult for you?
- Are you distracted with thoughts or judgments?
- Are you comfortable with silence?
- Do you tend to fill empty spaces with the sound of your own voice?
- Are you aware of your own somatic sensations of the present moment- attentive to sight, sounds, environment and having attunement to the presence of the other as well?

**Source: Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening.
Andrea Cohen with Leah Green and Susan Partnow. 2017.**

Listening Without Speaking- Break-Out Room

Listener:

- Be fully present for your partner without the use of words.
- Direct your energy to the area of your heart as you listen to your partner.
- Allow yourself to be nourished by this practice.
- Don't interrupt or interject comments.
- When you find your mind wandering, bring yourself back to keeping your heart open and listening without judgment or analysis.

Source: Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening.
Andrea Cohen with Leah Green and Susan Partnow. 2017.

Listening To Another Without Speaking Break-Out Room

Speaker:

- Take a moment to reflect on the sentence, **“One place where I’m currently feeling challenged in my life is...”**
- Focus your breath on the area around your heart before beginning to speak.
- Speak from your heart without judging or analyzing your words.
- Silence is OK.
- This time is for you, rather than for your listener.
- Allow yourself to be vulnerable.
- Slow down to notice if you are staying connected to your heart as you speak; re-focus your energy there if needed.

De-briefing- Journal and Discussion

When you were speaking:

What did the listener do that made you feel s/he was truly present?

How was this different from the way you are normally listened to?

What did you appreciate?

Anything else?

When you were listening:

How was this different from the way you normally listen?

What did you appreciate in this process?

What were you aware of that felt comfortable/uncomfortable?

Was there anything that made you feel relieved about being in this role?

Anything else?

What would you like to remember about this exercise?

Is there someone in your life you would like to listen this way?

Source: Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening.

Andrea Cohen with Leah Green and Susan Partnow. 2017.

Embodied Listening

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. (Covey, 2013, p.251)

- Listening from the neck down-feeling in your own body and mind what the speaker is saying, as well as listening with your ears and your eyes to the other.
- Sensing deeply what is happening for the other person.
- Consciously and intentionally, being a loving, connected and therapeutic presence.
- Restraining our own minds from wandering or from multi-tasking.
- Noting your own breathing, posture, gestures and body language, as well as the one to whom you are listening.

Source: Germer, C. and Neff, K. Teaching the Mindful Self-compassion Program, A Guide for Professionals. p. 263-268.

Embodied Listening


- Listening with the whole body, a deep listening in which we are fully present for others. Listening to our own inner voice as well as voice of the speaker.
- Focusing as much on the speaker, as on what is being said.
- Speaking without interruption often helps the speaker find their own answers.
- Giving others space and support to share their experience fully, without judging, shifting the topic to ourselves, or even trying to be helpful before help is asked for.

Source: <https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/what-is-embodied-listening/>
David Rome.2016.

Embodied Listening Exercise Instructions

- Practicing embodied listening as well as connected presence.
- Allowing warm feelings for the speaker to rise within you and feeling free to express compassion your face and eyes.
- Adopting a comfortable and open compassionate posture.
- Breathing in and out in connected presence.
- Breathing in for self will connect you with your body.
- Breathing out will connect you with the speaker.
- Compassion in and out, feeling reconnected as you listen in an embodied way.
- Let your eyes close when the person is done; let what you said or heard settle inside you.
- Focusing on the speaker as much as what is being spoken
- Abandoning the urge to fix the person, restraining your mind from wandering as you sense deeply what is happening to the person.

Source: Germer, C. and Neff, K. Teaching the Mindful Self- compassion Program. A Guide for Professionals. p. 263-268.



Be careful how you are
talking to yourself because
you are listening.

- Lisa Hayes

RawFoodForLife.org

Silver Lining Story Reflection

Guided meditation of a past struggle, but that as you look back, taught you an important lesson...



People start to
heal the moment
they feel heard.

-Cheryl Richardson

Please Hear What I'm Not Saying
A Poem's Reach Around the World



by Charles C. Finn

Resources

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