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Razvoj osebnih potencialov

3 dimensions of listening

Can you imagine a world, where people didn't take responsibility for learning how to drive?

What if some people only learned how to press the gas pedal and some only learned to press the brake pedal? I think this would be a very strange and probably very dangerous world.

It seems obvious to us to take responsibility for learning how to drive. Our lives depend on it.

The ignorance for taking responsibility is greater when it comes to listening.

At first sight it seems like there is nothing to learn.

The conflicts and misunderstandings are mostly caused by other people's bad listening, usually say- the speakers. With this kind of beliefs, it is not surprising, that only 5% of the educated population attend any kind of listening course in their life.

If we only knew how important listening truly is for every aspect of our life.

We can't really take responsibility for something we don't feel responsible for.

As Einstein said, we can't solve a problem at the same level it was created. Similarly, we can't listen more deeply and consciously if we don't know there are other ways and other things to hear.

To create more awareness about the importance listening plays in our life and how it can solve some of the most difficult problems in our lives, I will describe 3 dimensions of listening.

I will call them; the Intellectual level, the emotional and the spiritual level of listening.

The intellectual level of listening is all about the content. It is about all of our knowledge, our memories, our goals and the focus and attention to achieve them. I would say that this level of listening is the most common way we learned to listen.

Let's say that we have a very important project to finish and we need some very specific information from a coworker. We prepare for what we need and during the conversation listen very actively for what we need and to get the information we need.

This type of listening, even though very useful and practical, can also get us in trouble or create many misunderstandings and conflicts, when we are not aware, that the other person is trying to tell us something beyond the words. Sometimes, the untold message is much more important than what they say.

As humans, we experience life through feelings a lot richer than we can actually express with a limited number of words. It is like trying to put a soccer ball through a needle head. This is why it is very important to be aware of the second dimension of listening where we listen to the feelings. We listen to the spirit of the message. We could even say, that we listen with all of our senses.

In the summer, I went to get lunch at the popular restaurant near my office. It is usually packed and everything very fast paced. So a bit expecting but still very surprised, when the waitress rushed over to my table in a hurry and in a very aggressive tone asked me; 'What are you going to eat today?.' From the intellectual level of listening, the question was appropriate. From the emotional level, I could hear the anxiety, frustration and anger in her voice. I understood, that she was having a hard day and incorporated this information into my communication of the order. A friendly supportive question and comment let her know that I understand her and this allowed her to let go of the frustration and continue her work in a better state of mind.

Sometimes the feelings are not as obvious as in the example above. When a partner comes home from work and vents about how he or she is going to resign from his or her job because of the boss, we might be quick to get into the content of the situation and engage with all the

details into what happened. Usually, this is just fuel to the fire, since we are not hearing the essence of the problem, the feelings. When things calm down, we usually see clearly again and put things in perspective. When we listen to the feeling behind the message first, many hours of unproductive conversation can be saved and more understanding and connection felt.

If we want to go deeper still, we need to realise that we can't listen more deeply by listening only to the intellectual or emotional content. Transcending the first and second level of listening brings us to the true connection, rapport and understanding, the spiritual dimension of listening.

Without knowing this dimension of listening, it is a mystery where true rapport and understanding in the conversation come from. We usually think that it comes from the information, either the words or the feelings, so we try to share our similar experiences or feelings of empathy to create them. Usually without much connection to show for it, since the speaker still does not feel heard.

The real connection happens in the namaste moment. When there is a soul to soul connection. When we meet in the silence of our shared being. At this spiritual level of listening, it is all about just listening, about just being with another human being. With an empty mind. In silence.

In this listening, boundaries melt and we feel as if there is no other person, just being and experiencing.

We experience this level of listening when in love, when seeing beauty, when in awe, gratitude and deep compassion with others.

This level of listening is very important because it is fully accepting of any kind of content. It is what allows us to be aware and present. It allows the recognition of aware presence as our true nature. Understanding, rapport and insights are what births from this listening without listening.

The three dimensions of listening presented are not actually levels or dimensions. Listening is always just listening, aware presence in all three dimensions.

Even though we can improve greatly on all three dimensions, it is important to realise, that it is always only our awareness, that is the true tool, that makes this possible.

The recognition of awareness that is always aware of the content, the feelings and of the awareness itself is what allows the recognition that we are not listening. This recognition wakes us up to the present moment and the message the speaker is trying to get across or the new knowledge we need to learn more.

Just like with learning anything else, I believe that knowing more about the different dimensions of listening will allow us to take more responsibility, become better communicators and hopefully have many more options about how to create our relationships through listening.

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Toastmasters business club Slovenia speech, 7. December 2020.