

Embodied Learning Module

The Art of Listening

Aims <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide a lived experience of different ways humans listen to each other.2. Cultivate awareness of habitual patterns of listening and responding to others.3. Offer alternatives to habitual listening styles and patterns.4. Cultivate understanding about the impact of the quality of presence on the quality of connection in an interaction with another person.
Environment <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Seating in a circle for all participants, facilitator and assistant(s).2. Sufficient floor space to mill around and engage in one-on-one interactions.
Materials <p>(Optional) Bell or other sound producing instrument.</p>
Preparation <p>None</p>
Activity Description <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. While sitting in the circle, invite the participants to remember a relatively recent experience that had some impact on them, either pleasant or unpleasant.2. Invite the participants to imagine they are going to tell a friend or acquaintance about this experience, and to come up with a “headline,” an opening sentence of the story about the experience.3. Invite the participants to mill around the activity space, noticing where their attention is drawn. Invite awareness of body sensations, thoughts and impulses as described in the Milling ELF. <i>VARIATION: Rather than milling, invite participants to select a new partner directly during each transition.</i>4. After about 30-45 seconds of milling, invite the participants to stop in front of the next person they come to and stand facing each other. For an odd number of participants, either invite one person to participate as a witness, ask an assistant to participate, or participate yourself.5. Ask each pair to decide who is “A” and who is “B” and then give these instructions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Starting with A, share your “headline,” the sentence describing your chosen experience.b. Once A has shared, B responds according to the sequence described in Step 8 below.c. Switch roles and repeat (B shares and then A responds).6. Once both partners have shared and responded, harvest the learnings of this interaction using the Inquiry Framework shown below.

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7. Invite each pair to acknowledge and thank their partner in any way that is connecting and authentic, then resume milling.
8. Perform five rounds of the activity, as described in steps 4 through 7. The response of the listener progresses according to this sequence: *VARIATION: Perform only rounds 1, 4 and 6.*
 - a. Round 1: The listener asks a question about the details of the story.
 - b. Round 2: The listener offers advice, e.g. "You should have ____."
 - c. Round 3: The listener offers sympathy, e.g. "I know how you feel."
 - d. Round 4: The listener does not respond; they just listen and notice their own direct experience including body sensations, thoughts and impulses.
 - e. Round 5: After listening and paying attention to their own direct experience, the listener reflects the content of what they heard the speaker say, without interpretation or summarizing.
 - f. Round 6: After listening and paying attention to their own direct experience, the listener guesses what's important to the speaker in what they shared. This could take the form of an empathy guess.
9. After the final interaction, invite everyone to resume their seats and then harvest the entire activity using the Inquiry Framework shown below.

Inquiry Framework

Use inquiry to harvest the experience of the participants. Use the main points listed below as a reference point for framing the responses to these questions.

1. For each interaction: What did you experience? *VARIATION: Wait until after all three rounds are complete to harvest.*
2. After all three interactions:
 - a. What did you experience in the progression of these interactions?
 - b. Which interaction was easiest? Hardest?
 - c. What did you notice as the speaker in each interaction?
 - d. What did you notice as the listener in each interaction?
3. What insights do you have about the way you typically listen to others?

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Main Points

1. We are unlikely to notice our habitual patterns of listening and responding until we experience something different.
2. The first step in offering authentic or empathetic presence to another person is to be connected with your own direct experience (e.g. sensations, thoughts, and impulses).
3. Offering authentic or empathetic presence does not require a verbal response.
4. Reflecting the content of what another person shared contributes to the person's sense of being heard accurately.
5. Guessing about what is important to another person in what they are sharing (making an empathy guess) is generally more connecting than asking questions about the details of their story or offering advice or sympathy.