

The Art of Listening

- A. Old paradigm versus the new.
 - 1. Old paradigm: listen simply on the level of text, analyze for weaknesses, plan your response as you are listening.
 - 2. New paradigm: “what’s happening here?” Staying with not-knowing.
- B. Avoid the “content trap.” Distinguish text from sub-text.
 - 1. Listen to text with your rational mind, listen to sub-text with your heart and body.
- C. Listen for unspoken assumptions and dilemmas.
 - 1. Ask not simply what this person *means*, but what does he/she feel and need?
 - 2. The client may be demonizing their spouse, but underneath the rage may be a huge hurt that is crying out for recognition. What does the client need? Revenge? Empathy? Acknowledgment of fears and needs?
- D. Listen to *yourself*. Listen in yourself for the unspoken feelings in the room.
 - 1. Listen for what the client is feeling and needing by feeling inside yourself, using sympathetic resonance within the interpersonal field.
 - 2. Notice what arises inside you but don’t react to it or act it out—“set it aside” and make use of it only after appropriate deliberation.
- E. Listen to the field.
 - 1. Ask: *What’s happening here? What is it like to be with these people?*
 - 2. Be as open and malleable as possible.
 - 3. Allow the process to “have its way with you.”
 - 4. Recognize that this is unnerving and edgy.
- F. Reflect back your perceptions, owning your interpretations as just that.
- G. Stay in your authenticity and integrity.
 - 1. Trust your ability to stand your ground *and* be profoundly open to the other.
 - 2. Be concerned about the parties’ reactions, but not overly concerned.
- H. Keep your antennae attuned to the parties’ level of trust in you.
- I. Distinguish levels of listening: Listening at, listening with, listening as.