



## Lesson 12: Listening Skills Development

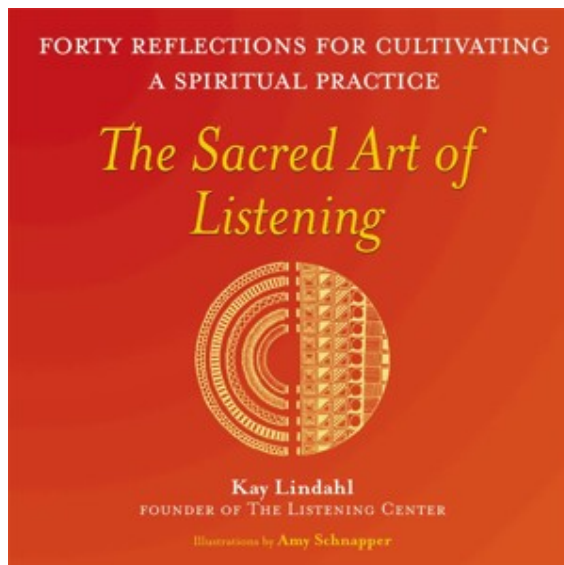
*Sacred listening is listening for what is possible, not just for what is wrong.*

~ Kay Lindahl

Welcome to the final lesson of the P~P~S Success Mastery Program and congratulations and getting here! This final lesson focuses on listening. That may sound like an odd topic to end on, but this chapter is about so much more than hearing the words that other people utter. Beyond improving how you listen to others, this lesson is about learning to listen to your body, your mind, your emotions and your soul. In many ways, the lessons that we've worked through so far provide the foundation for this more robust sense of listening. In that regard, the lesson is a natural extension of the previous lessons and therefore, I think you'll find that it's a great way to wrap up the program!

One of my primary sources when creating this lesson was the book *The Sacred Art of Listening*, by Kay Lindahl. The book offers 40 meditations or reflections on how to cultivate a spiritual or sacred listening practice. Each of the 40 reflections is coupled with a beautiful Mandala and the combination of the two is very inspirational. I highly

recommend this book to you as a way of supplementing your lessons here.



### Learning Objectives:

1. Explore useful means of listening available to us.
2. Investigate how your P~P~S lessons have offered *listening options*.
3. Learn to *empty the bone* or how to prepare yourself for spiritual listening.



## **Listening Methods – Why Bother?**

Before I begin discussing some of the different listening methods, I want to address a question that may be running through your head. Why bother? Why should I be worried about listening to others, especially if most people out there aren't interested in contributing to my legacy? My answer to this question is there is really only one thing we can take with us when we die and that is what we've become. We do not evolve or grow in a vacuum. We grow because of our interactions with others and listening effectively to others and to ourselves can offer a much less painful shortcut to many of the lessons life has to offer.

Moreover, listening *is* a spiritual practice. After having worked through Lesson 11, you will probably agree with me that communicating effectively with other human beings is one of the greatest challenges that any of us faces during our lives. This difficulty, as you remember from the last lesson, arises because we have been programmed so poorly to convey our beliefs. We have to work very hard to go beyond our cultural, social, familial and habitual programming. I know we can do it! I work on it all the time and I'm excited to have you with me on this journey of sacred listening.

It is also worth our time to become a sacred listener, because listening is a creative force. To be heard is to be loved and nurtured and this fosters growth. As parents, lovers and members of society in general, our capacity to listen is significantly related to our capacity to love, nurture and to foster growth in other people. As important as it is for us to be healthy and whole as individuals, it is equally important for us to realize that none of us can exist without each other. We are all part of space as I taught in Lesson 10 and that means we are all dependent upon relationships. Given that this is the case, the more capable we are of listening, the more loving and nurturing our relationships will be.

## **Effective Listening – The Basics**

*Who is listening?*



Kate Lindahl points out in her *Sacred Listening* that we spend about 45% of our time listening to something or someone. That may not be so surprising to you, but the really telling statistic is that we are distracted or preoccupied for 75% of that time! If you crunch the numbers, that means that we spend, on average, around 10.8 hours/day listening, but of that time, we are really only paying attention for about 2.1 hours. That's an incredible amount of wasted time!

One of the reasons that most people find it so difficult to listen is that the average adult attention span is about 22 seconds. Immediately after listening we only remember about 50% of what we've heard and in just a few hours, the average person can remember just about 20% of what they've heard. This isn't an inherent part of our nature, but the result of bad food, little sleep or movement, and all sorts of bad programming.

*Three basic components to effective listening*

Effective listening takes real skill. *You must be able to silence yourself*, to still that urge to complete your partner's sentence or to think ahead to what they might be saying before they've completed their thoughts. This allows your partner to truly be heard when they are speaking. *Genuine listening also requires time for reflection* before we respond to a speaker. We must also allow time for our partner's reflection as well when we are communicating. Finally, effective listening also requires a willingness to *slow down and be present with the speaker*. By this I mean that there must be a genuine desire and drive to understand the intention and the meaning behind the speakers words.

We can put the last point another way. To improve our listening skills, we must *listen with intention*. Statistics show that the average person speaks at 120 – 150 words per minute. Interestingly enough, the brain can process about 500 words per minute. To listen with intention means that we aren't planning your counterattack with those remaining 350 words per minute. Rather, listening with intention means that we use the extra processing time to be present with the speaker, to be silent or to meditate. We should allow their being and their truth and their being to enter your truth and your being so that you may make a connection with that person. This doesn't require that we agree with everyone that we listen to, but that we *understand* him or her. When we understand people, we open the door to new possibilities.



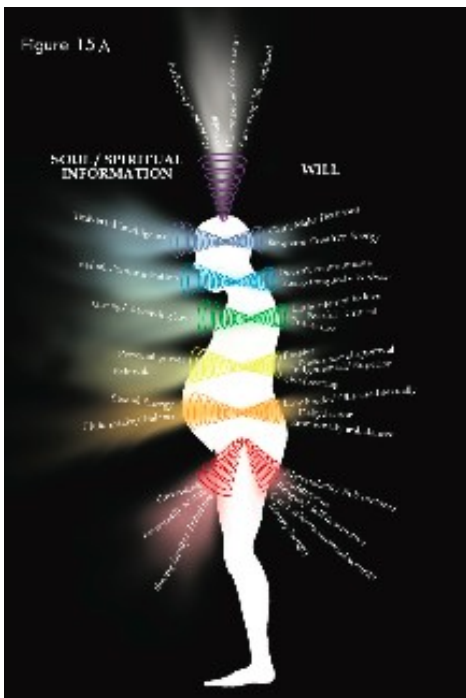
## Ways of Listening: Body, Mind, Heart and Soul Listening



### *Body Listening*

When it comes to body listening, we must all remember that each person must listen *through* him or herself. Therefore, if you are the listener and your body is out of balance, if your Chakra system is out of balance or if you are unhealthy in anyway, then your capacity to truly listen to somebody will be distorted in direction proportion to the imbalances in your body. The body provides the receiver for auditory information. The body is the membrane of experience just as the eardrum is the membrane of hearing.

When you are listening to someone else, try to recall what you've learned from lesson 2 about the body and the Chakra system. Knowing that the body and the mind are one organism can provide a great deal of help in understanding the vantage point of the speaker.



Look at the picture to the left. By now you probably know that this person is likely to have a number of imbalances in their body and mind, particularly in the second, third and fifth Chakra. An imbalance in the second Chakra (rhythm) the person could be either very aggressive or very passive, depending upon whether their imbalance is an excess or lack of energy. In the case of a person with an excess of energy at their third



Chakra (personal power and self-will) you may find that the person is overly aggressive, pushy, controlling or disrespectful. A lack of energy at the third Chakra will result in a person that will let others walk all over them. These are often times the people that cannot effectively communicate (the fifth Chakra). This is because the third and fifth Chakra are energetically linked. A person with an imbalance in the third Chakra is very likely to have an imbalance in their fifth Chakra as well. So someone who has a suppressed self-will will also have a reduced ability to communicate.

By looking at a person's body, you may be able to make important observations about why that person is feeling the way they are and expressing the opinions that they are expressing. Remember that the body is the mind and the body cannot lie. So when you see someone who is clearly out of balance at the level of their body-mind, have empathy and try to understand through reading their body where their perceptions may be distorted or why they may take the positions they do. The more out of balance the body is, the more stressful it is to exist in that body. An unhealthy person is more likely to communicate through their stress and as their stress, and therefore they are more likely to be reactive and less responsive or rational.

The tired or unhealthy person is stuck in their bottom three Chakras. He is what I call "animalized," and is mostly concerned with the questions:

Am I safe?

Am I able to sustain myself?

Am I able to feed myself?

Are my rhythms normal?

Is my anabolic/catabolic cycle in balance?

In short, the unhealthy person is mostly focused on survival. He is in a perpetual state of fight-or-flight, which automatically turns his energies inward. This means that he isn't going to be a very effective sacred listener.



### *Mind Listening*

To be a sacred listener means to understand vantage of the speaker. To that end, you must be aware of the role the ego is playing in your partner's communication. Listen carefully for the terms "I," "We" and "They" and how your partner uses those terms. Those people lacking self-esteem tend to lead their sentences with "We" or "They" to minimize the value of their own voice and to create consensus where they don't feel strong or safe in their own opinion. For example, if your supervisor was giving you a yearly review, he might say, "we have noticed that you regularly take more than one hour for your lunch break," when he was the person that observed the longer lunch breaks. As I said, the use of the word "we" gives the appearance of a kind of strength to the supervisor's opinion that he feels is lacking were he to say, "I have noticed that..." The problem here is that it's hard for the listener to address this nebulous "We." There is really no engagement between the listener and the speaker. On the other hand, if your supervisor were to use the more authentic "I," you can form a connection with your supervisor and discuss his opinions. When someone that you are speaking with leads in with "We," "they," or "all" you can set the conversation on more authentic grounds by asking if they could clarify who they mean when they use those words. Who is "we?" Who is "they?" Who is "all?" How many people are they talking about? In short, it may well be up to you to really draw the speaker out so that you can be present with him or her in the conversation. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you need to do so.

If you reflect back to lesson 2 where I described values memes, I offered a kind of chronology and ontogeny of the values memes that provide the value structure for humans. As a free thinker and a sacred listener, mind listening means being able to perceive the values memes that play the most influential role in your partner's current consciousness. As a refresher, have a look at the chart reproduced from Lesson 2 on the next page. Though everything on the chart is important, pay particular attention to the Motivational System, Specific Motivation and Problem of Existence. Those will help you to better identify and understand the meme structure of your partner as well as how to best be present with them in conversation.

I've been talking about how to listen with your mind, but it is just as important to understand the limitations on relying on your mind when you are becoming a sacred



listener. I often find it interesting and instructive to look at the roots of words to see what they really mean. The word “discussion” comes from the Latin roots “dis” which means apart, and “quater” which means to shake. So when you’re having a discussion with someone you are shaking apart the topic of your conversation. There is also an important link between “discussion” and the words “percussion” and “concussion.” All three share the same Latin root whose meaning is to break things up. The point here is that as I’ve tried to show you throughout much of the program, the mind’s job is to break things up – to separate and to categorize. This is not so bad for much of human experience, but it isn’t all that great if your goal is to be a sacred listener. If you listen from the place of your mind, you will break the conversation up. You will lose the unity of the conversation – the unity between you and your partner – and you will overlook what is real and what is true. It is also difficult to truly be present with a speaker when you are busily dissecting what they are telling you. In short, the mind is not the place you want to be listening from if you want to truly understand your speaker.

Levels of Existence as Seen by Dr. Clare W. Graves <i>from... "Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap," The Futurist, April 1974</i>								
Level	Learning System	Thinking	Motivational System	Specific Motivation	Means Values	End Values	Nature of Existence	Problems of Existence
H-U	All learning systems open	Differential	Experience	?????????	Experiencing	Communion	Experientialistic	Accepting existential dichotomies
G-T	All learning systems open	Systematic	Existential	Self-Worth	Accepting	Existence	Cognitive	Restoring viability to a disordered world
F-S	Observational	Relativistic	Affiliation	Love, Affiliation	Sociocentricity	Community	Personalistic	Living with the human element
E-R	Expectancy	Multiplistic	Independence	Adequacy, Competency	Scientism	Materialism	Materialistic	Conquering the physical universe
D-Q	Avoidant Learning	Absolutistic	Security	Order, Meaning	Sacrifice	Salvation	Saintry	Achieving everlasting peace of mind
C-P	Operate Conditioning	Egocentric	Survival	Psychological survival	Exploitation	Power	Egocentric	Living with self awareness
B-O	Classical Conditioning	Autistic	Assurance	Aperiodic physiological needs	Traditionalism	Safety	Tribalistic	Achievement of relative safety
A-N	Habituation	Automatic	Physiological	Periodic physiological needs	No conscious value systems	No conscious value systems	Automatic	Maintaining physiological safety

*Heart Listening*

When it comes to heart listening, there are a number of important questions you should be asking yourself during any conversations. These include:



1. What is the speaker feeling?
2. What is the speaker wanting?
3. What is the speaker needing?
4. What is the speaker fearing?

The answers to some of these may not be so easy to discern. We don't always share our feelings directly when we speak with someone. You can, however, determine what the speaker is feeling even if it isn't obvious from what they are saying by allowing yourself to feel their emotions. We'll talk about how to do that in the upcoming section on *emptying the bone*. Identifying a person's dominant and subdominant values memes may also help you to answer those questions. When you know these things, you will be better able to understand somebody and feeling understood is essentially to feel loved or to feel cared for.

As a heart listener, it's important to remember that the more we understand one another, the less we fear in ourselves and in others. The less we fear, the more we trust and the more we trust, the more our hearts open to others. This is the fabric of life. Feeling loved and trusted is what makes life worth living. It may not happen very often, but the P~P~S Success Mastery Practitioner should be able to open her heart to love and to trust themselves and to know that other people, no matter what behavior they are displaying or how they are speaking and communicating, listening or not listening, are all after the same thing. They are after *love*. All people are doing their best to be loved. When you used sacred listening techniques and non-violent communication techniques you'll be much more capable of understanding those around you and being present with them. Even if the resulting interactions don't turn out favorably for you, you'll be in a position to understand the motives behind their behavior.

Our goal with heart listening is to listen to understand. While practicing heart listening you may not agree the other person, but until we can understand the other person or understand each other we can never come to know if we could possibly agree in whole or in part. Our inabilities to listen and communicate are both primary means by which we





create fear. With all the conflict in the world, now more than ever we need sacred listeners.



But just what is heart listening? Heart listening is a method of listening that opens us up to *dialogue*. Dialogue is much more effective than discussion, which as you recall means to shake or to break apart. The word “dialogue” comes from the roots “dia” which means “through” in Greek, and “logos” which means “word.” So “dialogue” literally means *words flowing through*. Dialogue encourages open-ended exploration and in such explorations we are less likely to entice judgment. In the picture to the left you can see a couple having an argument. At the root of many couple’s difficulties are emotions such as fear, shame and guilt. The crucial detail that many couples miss is that that those emotions are most often the result of

telling someone what they want to hear, rather than what they need to share. When you make someone feel guilty or shameful, it’s very likely that they’re going to succumb to the pressure that you’re putting on them. You may tell someone exactly what he or she want to hear just to get them off of your back, but that doesn’t mean that the problem has been resolved. It’s only when we connect and open each other to dialogue to let the words flow through the heart to be honest and non-judgmental that we have a chance of effective communication. Effective communication can only occur through effective listening. Listening through the heart and soul is the most effective form of communication.

### *Soul Listening*

When it comes to soul listening, it’s important that we are alone enough to commune with our own soul. If we don’t commune with our own soul and truly become present with which we are and really become present with ourselves, it’s almost impossible to become a soul listener. When soul listening, listen carefully for changes in direction in



life. Often events in people's lives are part of their soul path, yet most people fear such changes even when they're needed. There will be times for example when you're listening to someone close to you that is on the verge of a divorce or quitting a job and these are soul decisions. There has been many times when I've listened to people who have been diagnosed with terminal cancer or some other sort of a disease. I look at their body, I look at their memes and I look at their values memes, but more importantly I listen to their heart. What are they wanting? What are they feeling? What are they needing? And through the techniques that I will later share with you on emptying the bone I go behind all of it and commune with their soul and see which direction it is that the events in their life are trying to take them. We all come in with soul contracts and the soul will allow us to experience as much pain as it takes to redirect us to accomplish what we came to accomplish in this lifetime.

Soul connections can be made from any location in this universe. In space, all things are connected. The more you study physics and metaphysics, the clearer this fact becomes. Anybody that's ever become skilled at meditation, that has studied shamanism or worked with a shaman, or even anyone that has felt a moment of serendipity, you wish that you could talk to somebody and the phone rings and the person is on the other line, has had experiences that are direct consequence of the fact that there is no distance between us. What we see as a space-time domain is essentially an illusion. Quantum physics shows us that our reality is constituted of an endless series of relationships, and those relationships are observer dependant. When you are able to go behind someone's programming to be present with someone's soul, you are able to get to his or her highest truth. When you can learn to connect with somebody at the soul level, you're actually able to go to a level of truth that often times sadly they themselves have not recognized. The more programmed somebody is, the less likely they are to be in touch with their soul truth. It is a very high form of evolution to be able to listen to somebody at the level of their soul and it is my dream that you will nourish yourself to the level that you are capable of being present with the soul of those that you're conversing with.



## Listening is a Gift

*Listening is a gift.* When we listen completely to somebody we are giving him or her what is often the most cherished gift. Being present with someone through your listening is a form of love. Ultimately, if you're honest with yourself, we do almost everything as a means of acquiring love, be it self-love or the love of others. Listen completely to your own inner child.

If you remember from previous lessons, I showed that most people's psychological and neurological development is complete by around the age of twelve. The truth of the matter is, we're all children. We're just children in bigger bodies. My observation through my practice has been that very people are developed even to the age of twelve. Quite often what we're listening to is someone whose needs are linked to what they did not acquire in their development between the ages of birth and seven years of age. In many instances, what we're nourishing is something that was not present for them even in utero. For example if the mother of a child had painful relationships with the father, then the child will have experienced that relationship. It's well documented that hormones cross the placental barrier and that the child's reality is essentially the mother's reality. Since thoughts produce emotions and emotions are linked to our hormonal system, the mother's mental reality is the child's reality. Therefore, any woman that's pregnant is imprinting her developmental reality on the child and that serves as the ground substance from which the child grows. Just like it takes good soil to grow good, healthy nutritious plants, when we create life through male and female, we're actually imprinting that being with the soil of our own relationships. For that reason, it is important as a sacred listener to ask:

1. What need can I nourish in this being?
2. What is missing in their sacred soil?
3. What wound may we heal together?

Whenever we're listening to somebody, we're in a relationship with them. So when I work with someone as a therapist the question isn't "what can I do to fix you?" Rather it



is “what wound may we heal together?” How can we, as client and therapist, congeal in such a way that there is nourishment, a change of perspective or a change of experience?

Listen through the words to what is really being said. Is there a request being made? Very frequently when people are saying things to us, even if they’re offering things to us, there’s a request being made. Many people, for example, have been conditioned through their own life experiences not to ask for something directly, but to offer something as a means of getting something. I’ve experienced this quite often from people that want something from me and you may have experienced this as well. This is how the drug companies have overcome the medical industry. It’s called the *law of reciprocity* and salesmen use it in their favor. So as effective listeners, it’s very important to be aware that many people are conditioned to give in order to get, which is really just bartering. When you identify this, you have important decisions to make. Will you call them on their game because it’s not serving them? Or, are you simply going to be aware of it so that you as the listener are not caught up in an act of manipulation?

Is there an offer truly being made in the conversation? Sometimes there is. When you’re listening as a sacred listener, you’re making an offering and when somebody is being listened to they feel the offering. When someone is communicating to you honestly, they’re making an offering, because that’s connecting to your heart and creating a relationship. It’s important to remember that you want hear requests or offerings if your listening skills are trapped in ego, competitive listening, competitive speaking, fear, judgment or if you fear you’re in competition with your partner to be heard. Many people simply cannot listen to another person because they themselves do not feel listened to. Therefore, while you’re speaking to someone, instead of just listening to you they’re forming an argument or waiting for a moment where you have to stop speaking to catch your breath so they can interject. These are all indications that your partner isn’t listening to you and not feeling heard.

Sacred listening also requires that we use the SMART talk technology that I described in the previous chapter. Remember that SMART talk stands for:

**Specific** – avoid any ambiguity or vagueness in your conversations.



**Motive** – identify the reason that someone is speaking to you and why you are listening to them.

**Adapt** – genuine communication requires that you be able to change to meet the needs of the particular conversation.

**Repeat and Reinforce** – repetition ensures that you and your partner understand each other.

**Time out** – if the communications are not effective, then it is best to take a time out.

This SMART talk technology is helpful for both the speaker and the listener as it provides both parties a better opportunity to be present in the conversation.

### How to Listen



Here you can see a photograph of my wife and me together. We've learned in our relationship that whenever we need to discuss something important, we try to wait until we can both be present with each other. We're both extremely busy and one of the things that make for sacred listening is respecting the need to communicate enough to wait until you can effectively communicate. Sacred

listening also requires that you respect the person enough that you are going to communicate with enough that you can wait to do this effectively. Most of us, and I'm guilty of this sometimes too, are reactive. We have this urge to communicate whether it is positive or negative and we blurt things out, which leaves us in a state of incomplete communication. This kind of reflex-like communication short circuits our ability to be present with others and makes it much more difficult for others to be present with us.

An essential first step in becoming a sacred listener is to create a *sacred space* for listening to take place. In my professional work that sacred space is both my treatment room where it's private and enclosed. It's well defined by my certifications on the wall, the letters of recommendation, and the letters of membership. These work especially well



for left-brain thinkers who want to see evidence of my qualifications. For the more sensitive feeling people, I have my library where I bring people and they can see who I am and sense what is important to me. I've chosen colors and created an environment that is inviting and that is a sacred space for listening and communicating. In fact, that's where I've done most of my work with my clients in the past few because the environment is conducive to making change. If the environment is too pushy, then it polarizes the inhabitant into giving a response. The sacred space should be soft, allowing the feelings and thoughts to flow naturally.

Once you've created a sacred space, you will need to clearly define the *parameters for safe expression*. If you're dealing with a relationship, for example a husband and wife discussing adultery, and you want to get to the bottom of the relationship, then both parties need to feel safe to convey what they are thinking, feeling and needing. If the both of you *don't* feel safe discussing your true thoughts and feelings then you're much more likely to tell the other person what they want to hear or to fail to be present with your partner in one-way or another. This means the pathology is likely to continue and you'll be wasting your time and effort when you have the conversation. When I work with my patients, I make it clear that there's nothing they're going to tell me that I haven't heard before and I honestly mean that. I let them know that there is nothing that they are going to tell me that will keep me from being in a position where I can effectively listen to them. So you have to set some sort of parameters to the conversation that lets your partner know exactly what they can say *freely*.

Setting such parameter is also important because of our nature. It's natural to fear offending someone when you talk to them. It's not in our human nature to wound another human being. When we do it, we're going against our nature. Words are like a sword – they cut and they wound. If you set conversational parameters with the people around you, you're giving them the tools to speak to you effectively and to avoid expressing themselves for fear of offense.

Because sacred listening is really forming a relationship with your partner, it's important to find a common objective with the speaker and to form a bond that allows opening of the heart. The non-violent communication method teaches the principle *connection*



*before correction.* In the book *The Sacred Art of Listening*, Kay Lindahl describes a tribal association where there is no crime. Whenever someone has committed a fault against another or what we would call a crime, the whole tribe gathers and the person that has committed the offense sits in the center of the circle of tribe members. Each person in the tribe then states aloud everything they love about the person who has committed the wrongdoing. After they have made it around the circle, the tribe gets up and walks away, and the offense is never spoken about again. The point is that the bond the tribe creates opens the heart of the individual who has fallen out of love with the rest of the tribe and welcomes that individual back into the community. So what does this mean? Whenever you are listening, connect before you correct or connect even before you listen. In so doing you will open the heart of the speaker.

Sacred listeners avoid creating distance between themselves and the speaker. We create distance when we say things like, “I don’t care.” Remember that to listen is to be present with the speaker, to connect with them and stating that you don’t care is one way of severing any connection that you have to your partner. It can be hard to avoid creating distance of this kind because sometimes the feelings just rise right up and jump out of our mouths. We just need to work at moving away from being reactive. I’ve certainly been guilty of this in the past, but the difference now is that while I am still honest, I am clear about the motives behind sharing my opinions. My motive is to create unity rather than division and letting your partner know this is your motive as well can help them to understand why you offering your particular opinions.

To truly listen to someone means to become present with their inner being. If you aren’t present in this way, you are most likely present only with their programming. To connect to the inner being is essentially to connect to the soul. At the soul level, we are all one organism. The soul is a direct emanation of the absolute. So when you’re present with someone’s soul, you’re present with their deepest reality and you can go behind their programming. This is why it’s so important to differentiate between body listening, mind listening and heart listening. When you’re present with someone at their inner being, you’re most present with their heart. If you go behind the heart and are present with their soul, most often what you’re going to find is absolute non-judgment – a sense of emptiness.



That sounds good in theory, but how do we put that idea in practice? What can you do so that you are more likely to be present in any conversation? One place to start is with the four agreements of Don Miguel Ruiz.

1. *Be impeccable with your word* – say what you mean and mean what you say.
2. *Don't take anything personally* – this is our lesson 9. Don't get your feathers wet!
3. *Don't make assumptions* – to assume is to ask for trouble because they are usually based on a lack of information.
4. *Always do your best to maintain sacred listening space and avoid judgment* – don't avoid observations or decisions, those are important. Avoid the sort of judgment that the speaker or your partner is less or more worthy or valuable than you. The judgment you want to avoid is the attachment of some kind of value to the person.

The latter two points are especially important because they will help you to avoid forming preconceived notions about the people around you. They provide an openness that is necessary for sacred listening.



The last point in particular can be difficult. Old habits have sharp teeth and judging others is a very common habit. Sacred listening requires that we be present with our old habits, including the inclination to judge others, as they arise. When you feel triggered or off center, you can balance these feelings by practicing management by detachment. When your programming rises up, resist it by putting yourself outside of yourself. In this picture you can see M.C. Escher looking at himself in a crystal ball. In essence, when you look at yourself in a mirror, you're looking at yourself as an outside observer. The mirror allows you to see what you look like from the outside.





We can feel our behavior rising up inside of us internally and we always have the choice to check that behavior if it's not going to serve our sacred listening opportunity before it manifests externally in a way that may harm someone else or detract from the motive of our sacred listening. We always have the option to transform the energy of our past behaviors and programming into a more empowering consciousness reality that suits what is optimal in the moment. When you're in the moment of sacred listening you have every opportunity to feel your own biases and judgments rising up. Your partner may not be aware of those biases and judgments as quickly as you will, because they originate in you and they are part of your reality. As you feel these emotions and thoughts arising, ask yourself, as Byron Katie suggests, "Is this true? Is this *absolutely* true? How would I feel if I didn't think that thought? Can I turn it around?" This series of questions can help you to understand and to move beyond the programming that just isn't serving you.

You can also avoid the difficulties that old habits can cause by consciously taking the time to *reflect before acting or speaking*. When somebody speaks to us, we don't have to respond immediately. The only reason why you might be compelled to respond immediately is if you are acting on your own mental programming. The reason a calculator can give you the answers it does so quickly is because the operations are already programmed into the calculator. But in order for you to have a relationship with someone, you've got to be willing to be present with that person and to allow a new experience to arise out of the interaction between them and you. On page 100 of *The Sacred Art of Listening*, Kay Lindahl describes a study in which it was discovered that the average schoolteacher studied only gave one second to respond before choosing a student to answer. When students did provide an answer before being called on, it was usually the same small subset of students that had something to offer. Were the other students unintelligent? Or, were they simply reflecting, thinking of the answer? The teachers in the study were instructed to give their students seven seconds to think about the answer before calling on someone. The researchers found that the number of students willing to offer an answer increased significantly, and the quality and depth of the answers also improved significantly. Students just need more time to reflect before giving an answer. I think the study is informative about the importance of reflection in general. We need to give ourselves the time and the space to overcome our programming and that means actively working to reflect before we act.



So by way of recap, here are nine tips to help you become a better sacred listener drawn from what I have described above as well as from the other lessons in the program:

1. When you are listening, suspend assumptions.
2. When speaking, express your *personal* response. Use “I” not “we” or “they.”
3. Listen without judgment.
4. Suspend status. Everyone is an equal partner in sacred listening.
5. Honor confidentiality.
6. Listen for understanding, not to agree or believe.
7. Ask clarifying or open-ended questions.
8. Honor silence and time for reflection.
9. One person speaks at a time.

Taken jointly, these tips will help you to be present with those around you as well as with yourself, enabling you to listen effectively.

### **Emptying the Bone**

I’d like to share one final sacred listening technique that I have been using for many years myself, particularly when working with challenging clients. I use a Native American technique developed by shamans and medicine men called emptying the bone. Bones are antennae and they attract cosmic radiation to us. The science of yoga, as I have pointed out before, is the science of putting our bones in different postures to create different antennae effects. The Native American saying “empty the bone” means to empty yourself of your self. It directs the listener to become a receptacle. You cannot fill something that’s full, so in order for us to be present for someone else, we have to get our issues, challenges and life’s difficulties out of the way to make room for the other person’s life. Deep listening requires exquisite perception, which can only come through you. Therefore you must get out of the way of the other and become transparent. Empty the bone.

Emptying the bone requires practice. It requires that you have effectively met your “I” needs first. You cannot be genuinely present with another before you have learned to



become present with yourself. Emptying the bone requires that we take time in our lives to practice emptying ourselves and being present with nature, our heart, soul and our higher nature. Some methods that can teach you to empty the bone include most of the exercise forms that I discussed in lesson 2: Tai Chi, Qi Gong and Yoga. Osho describe a number of different meditation techniques that can help you to learn to empty the bone as well. He developed these techniques as he began to teach in the west and found that people had difficulty emptying their minds. He had to develop active meditation techniques and you can find many of these techniques on his CD's in music stores or at [www.wonderfull-things.com](http://www.wonderfull-things.com). There are other meditation techniques beyond Osho's and the one's that I've listed here, but it's important to find one that works well for your psyche, personality and development. Different days can call for different methods as well. Some days I need a more active technique and other days I can do traditional sitting meditation. The secret is to have enough options that you can prepare in any environment to engage in sacred listening.

Your state of wellbeing will most definitely impact your ability to empty the bone. Your listening comes through you. Your ability to empty the bone balances you into a listening point. The more out of balance you are, the more out of balance your capacity is to be present with the other and interpret them accurately. This is why all of the material I taught in lesson 2 is so important. In order for us to effectively achieve our potential as P~P~S Success Mastery Practitioners, we have a definite need to commit to ourselves and to live a healthy life. That doesn't mean that you have to be a monk. I live by the 80/20 rule, which says that as long as you take care of yourself properly 80% of the time and follow the principles that I've laid out in lesson 2, then you'll be in shape to withstand all of the play you want for the other 20% of the time.

The key benefit to the meditation techniques and the self-management principles in lesson 2 is that they help you to free your mind of distractions. You cannot be present with someone if your mind is wandering away from them to think about your finances, your relationships or your favorite TV show. In the photo on the next page, you can see me working with the parents of two very close friends of mine in Sweden. My friend's mother is recovering from cancer and I'm working with her to balance her energy systems through breathing and sound healing. I've put this picture here because this kind



of healing *requires* that I am fully present with my patient at a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level. If I'm full of worries, have other things to do, and am full of counter-dialogue, I cannot be present with her. In order for me to do the work that I do effectively, I have got to empty the bone. So practice putting things in the closet when you are engaged in sacred listening.



Emptying the bone is an activity that you can do for someone else as well as for yourself and it is a great way to smooth the way for any kind of communication. Many people have so much chatter running through their heads that they may well need something like emptying the bone in order to help them be present in the conversation as well. Here you can see me getting ready

to work with my clients and I am teaching them a technique that involves toning both with tuning forks and with some chanting. Another technique that I've found to be very effective is to use what Bryan Tracy calls *worry breaks*. Many people are so worried about so many things that while you're talking to them all they're doing is worrying. So I've found it very useful to sit down and take 10 minutes and say,

“Ok, let's just get this worrying over with. For the next 10 minutes I want you to worry as effectively as you can and write down the worst possible scenario that can in regard to anything. But after that 10 minutes of worrying let's agree that it's time to put the worrying behind us and move forward with our objectives so that you can accomplish what we came to accomplish.”

This is another way of removing a large source of distractions and then we have a much greater chance of offering sacred listening and your partner will have a greater chance of



receiving your offering. Remember, it's not just you listening to them, an important part of conversation is *them* listening to *themselves*.

## Lesson 12 Homework Assignment

This is it, your final P~P~S Assignment for the first year of the program. Congratulations! The exercise is to mind map the ways in which you're now aware that your listening could have been improved in your past. For example, give me real situations from your life, such as while discussing your desire for children with your spouse or significant other that you were unable to listen because you had an objective or motive or a need that was more important than listening to your spouse. Next, artistically demonstrate the corrective actions you would take in that situation with different colors and symbols. In the example I just gave, you might draw a picture of a baby in the middle of you and your spouse. On the left, you might write in red the things that you did while trying to communicate your want to have or not have the child, yet you were unable to effectively to create a sacred listening experience for your spouse because of what you did. On the right, in a more positive color such as green or blue, you might describe how you would do things differently now if you were in the same situation.

The second part of the assignment is to describe how you will now prepare a sacred listening space the next time you need to be fully present with another being. You can do this however you would like – either by Mandala, mind map or by writing. You should also describe which method you can commit to using to empty the bone so you can be an effective sacred listener. What are you willing to do for yourself so that you can be present with people in your life that are important to you personally, professionally and spiritually.

The third part of your homework assignment is to go back and to work through your self-assessment form again, now that you have completed all 12 of the Success Mastery Lessons. Once you've done that, have a look at your initial answers and your new answers and make note of where you've gone beyond your parental or childhood programming. I think you'll be amazed at the changes you'll see in your perception and your reality.



Finally, if you're willing, please write me an email explaining how you think the program has benefited you and any suggestions you may have to improve the program for future students. I really feel that this is necessary training for all of us to evolve and for us to reinforce what we want for ourselves. I value your experience and insight now that you've completed the program and I look forward to hearing from you and to exploring any suggestions you might have to improve the program so that we can get a higher level of commitment, retention and change in our lives and the lives of those around us. We are all in a relationship with each other whether we know it or not and whatever we do for ourselves we are doing for humanity and the world.

And now here we are. Is it this the end or is it the beginning? I think it's both! Every end is a beginning and every beginning is the end – the end of something to start something else. I thank you from the very core of my being for your commitment to yourself. You have been a great offering to me. You've allowed me to reinforce those parts of myself that I need to work on and continue to work on every day. Every time I interact with any P~P~S Practitioners it is a constant reminder of me to make the changes in myself that need to be made so that as I look through the eyes of my being the world can become the beautiful place that it really is. Thank you for allowing me to rise above my own ugliness, and to be able to see more of my own beauty. It is my dream that I have offered the same for you. Thank you. I love all of you!