

THE FIRST WINDOW

THE THREE-FOLD HUMAN BEING

Listening to the head, heart and feet

Listening and Questioning are without doubt the two most important skills. It's amazing, but if we are able to listen deeply to people, ask really good questions, and get people to do the same, our job is more than halfway done.

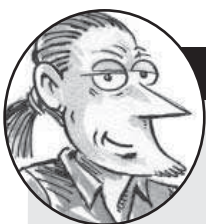
So, this is a very practical window. Think of it as a model for listening to people. Are you able to listen 'between the lines'? Can you hear the subtext beneath the main text? Can you hear, not just what people are saying, but what they are trying to say? Are you able to connect with what they are really feeling, and not just what they say they're feeling? Is it possible for you to ascertain what it is that they really want?

We call this deeper listening. It is one of the most important skills of a leader, development practitioner or facilitator.

LISTENING AT 3 LEVELS... TOGETHER!

We tend to place a heavy emphasis on thinking and rational thought without realising that our decisions in life come from the powerful combination of thinking, feeling and willing.

More often than not, what we think, what we feel and what we want are different things. Sometimes they can even be opposed. The challenge is to pay attention not only to logic and common sense, but also to the powerful messages delivered by the emotions and by the will.



LOFTY SHARES THIS SCENARIO...

Imagine that I'm a senior staff member and you're a new staff member. I ask you to sit with me and reflect on your work. You say "Ok, fine!" – it seems a good idea at first – but then you become anxious. You've had bad experiences of these kinds of interactions in the past. So although it sounds like a good idea, deep down you don't want to do it. Your rational mind and your will are at odds with one another. You may not even be conscious of this. Once we sit down together, all kinds of emotions kick in, you come across to me as defensive, and I start to worry about your work. Meanwhile, the reality is that your work is fine.

The trick is to listen not only to your logical response, but also to your feelings and will. As the senior staff member, I should be sensitive to your anxieties, and ask you how you feel about reflecting on your work with me. In listening to your answer, I should look for clues about your true feelings, not just what you say.

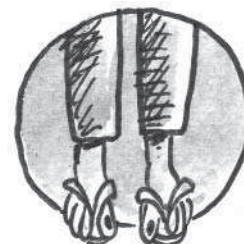
Head, heart and feet



We are **THINKING** human beings – we think about the things we perceive in order to understand them.



We are **FEELING** human beings – we experience the world through our emotions.



We are **WILLING** human beings – our needs and desires motivate us to act.

LISTENING TO OUR HEADS, HEARTS AND FEET... TOGETHER

LISTENING TO THE HEAD

This is the thinking level, made up of perceptions, thoughts, facts, concepts, arguments, ideas and spiritual insights.

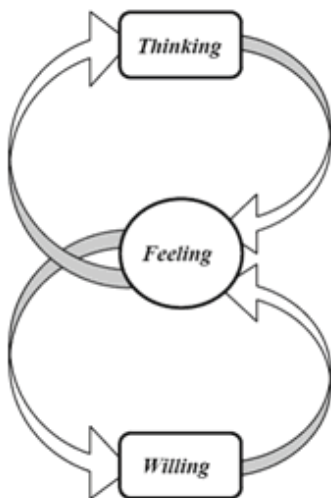
Listening non-judgementally means being open-minded and genuinely interested in where the other person is coming from, how they think and what assumptions they make.

LISTENING TO THE HEART

This is the feeling level, made up of emotions, moods and non-verbal experiences. Listening for feelings, paying attention to tone of voice, facial expressions, eyes and gestures. Empathetic listening means putting yourself in the other person's shoes. Listening to the silences can reveal feelings of disagreement or inadequacy, boredom or anger.

LISTENING TO THE FEET

This is the will level, where you listen for what people really want. Often, speakers themselves are only dimly aware of their own intentions and desires. It's surprising how few people are fully aware what motivates them and what they actually want in a situation. Skilful listening uncovers what lies 'behind' their thoughts and 'below' their feelings. Body language can reveal the will – a strong body presence may demonstrate a strong will, while a withdrawn body may reveal a weak will.



ESSENTIAL CHALLENGES OF LISTENING AT 3 LEVELS



People all have their own ways of seeing the world and thinking about things. Be careful not to assume they see things the way you do.



Listening to someone's true feelings gives you important clues about what really matters to them.



The will level is where resistance to change usually resides. Helping people to listen to and transform their own will is one of the deepest challenges of change.

Some challenges of deeper listening

QUIETEN YOUR MIND...

Given the amount of stuff going on in our own heads, it's amazing that we can even follow what other people are saying. Following the thoughts of a speaker is actually not such an easy thing to do. It requires us to put our own thoughts, feelings and will on hold for the moment. Once we do that, we are better able to hear what is really being said.

LISTENING TO ALL THREE LEVELS... TOGETHER

Try and work out whether what the person is saying truly reflects what they think, what they feel or what they want, and whether these are similar or different. It's not easy to separate these three components, and involves skillful listening.

FOLLOWING FEELINGS

The surface thoughts that people express can be quite misleading. That's why listening for someone's true feelings is necessary if we want to discover what really matters to them. If we can't identify their real feelings, it's going to be difficult to really understand why they are thinking in a particular way, or what they really want. Many people are out of touch with their own feelings and so a lot of our work involves helping people to access and describe them.

A good way to start is to simply ask people about their feelings. Encouraging them to express the range of feelings they are experiencing – especially their mixed feelings – can be very revealing.

Many people lack a vocabulary of different feelings. How can you help them build their vocabulary but without suggesting to them what they are feeling?

As humans we are capable of holding mixed, and often contradictory, feelings. We all have our love/hate relationships. I can be happy to see you but upset that you are late, both at the same time. Surfacing mixed feelings can help us understand why people behave the way they do, often in such confusing ways!

DON'T PRESSURISE!

People who struggle to express their feelings should not be pressurised to do so in public. Traumatic experiences in their lives may have led them to push their feelings away, to protect themselves from reliving the past. Some people will only reveal their true feelings in a one-on-one relationship with a person they trust.

THE IMPATIENCE TRAP

If we are listening to someone, we often "get" what they are saying before they are finished. Waiting for someone to battle through a long explanation of what seems to be an obvious point can be quite tiresome. Common responses are either to cut them short, or to tune out and think about something else while waiting for them to finish. But as facilitators we

A fun Exercise

In pairs, face each other and tell each other what you did yesterday... but **you must both speak at the same time!**

Do this for a minute.

Now discuss what happened and then ask yourselves how often you end up doing this kind of thing in everyday life without even realising it.

SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS

Here's how to get people in touch with their own thoughts and feelings before they participate in a discussion:

- Before a group discussion give participants a few minutes to think about the topic on their own, so that they can get in touch with their own thoughts and feelings about it.
- Suggest that they chat briefly to the person next to them to try out their ideas. This generally leads to greater participation.
- Where appropriate encourage people to express their feelings and what they want, not just their thoughts.
- **A Word of Caution:** Some people, when asked what they feel, say "I feel that...". This will always be a thought, not a feeling.
- Journaling is a great technique to get people to focus. Give participants a chance to sit quietly and write down their ideas, feelings and wants, and to think of questions that matter to them.

The Paralysis of Will

Why we don't act on our thoughts and feelings?



Often we feel powerless because we know we need to change but can't. Something stops us. We are experiencing a paralysis of will.



Usually this results from:

Doubt or self-doubt:

We doubt if people or situations can really change for the better. We doubt our own ability to meet the challenges of the future.

Hatred or self-hatred:

We resent or even hate others for past hurts. We hate ourselves for what we have done.

Fear:

We fear letting go of what we know even if it doesn't work. We fear the unknown ahead of us.

Transformation may require that we surface these doubts, hatreds and fears, so that we can deal with them.

should be careful not to fall into the impatience trap. We need to keep listening, consciously, for the feelings behind the thinking, and for the will being expressed by the speaker. This is deeper listening.

WAYS OF THINKING

What this all points to is that people have their own ways of thinking, their own meanings for words, and draw upon different experiences from ours to make meaning.

If we don't allow for differences in the other person's frame of reference, we're likely to get our wires crossed when talking to them. Worse, we sometimes assume we know what they're talking about when we don't.

We've all heard someone say "I know just what you mean". And we've all watched these know-it-all's demonstrate that they don't have a clue what we mean. We should be careful not to do the same thing.

Assuming everyone thinks alike is a major source of confusion.

3 CHALLENGES:

KNOW THYSELF • EXPRESS THYSELF • ACT OUT OF THYSELF



Martin Buber

“There are three principles in a man's being and life, the principle of thought, the principle of speech, and the principle of action. The origin of all conflict between me and my fellow-men is that I do not say what I mean and I don't do what I say.”

- 1 KNOW YOURSELF**
Think more of your own thoughts! Ask more of your own questions! Get in touch with your own feelings! Find out more of what you want!
- 2 EXPRESS YOURSELF**
Knowing what you think, feel and want makes it easier to express yourself and to stand up for yourself!
- 3 ACT OUT OF YOURSELF**
Act out of your own thoughts, your feelings and your will! Be yourself! Do what you must do! Have courage!