



Study Guide

The Little Book of Listening: Listening as a Radical Act of Love, Justice, Healing, and Transformation

Suggestions for use of this study guide:

This guide is intended for use by both individuals and groups. It will periodically be updated with additional material, so come back to this link from time to time to see what's new. We anticipate adding sections on interactive games and activities in 2024.

General Notes:

Reflection is a foundational skill for listening justly. We suggest utilizing whatever reflection practices resonate with you (or the group) as you move through the chapters and integrate their content into your own listening awareness and practice. Pay attention to your body's guidance: what practices are enjoyable, feel easy or fun? Refer to the Self-reflection micropractices listed on page 39 for some adaptable reflection ideas..

Reflection suggestions for Individuals:

- Journal your responses to the reflection questions.
- Ponder the questions as you walk, swim, or engage in repetitive activities.
- Sit quietly and reflect on each question separately. Record any insight that arises. If accustomed to meditating, utilize whatever form of analytic meditation you find useful.
- Note your responses to questions and content. Pay attention to what:¹
 - Inspires you
 - Surprises you
 - Makes you emotional
 - Challenges or creates resistance in you

Reflection suggestions for groups:

Group processing

¹ The first three questions come from Angeles Arrien. The last is from Vie Thorgren

- Discussion Format:
 - For larger groups, divide into small groups of two or three to optimize participation
 - In each group, begin with a minute or more of silent reflection on each question.
 - Each person then has two minutes of uninterrupted time to speak. Allow for a silent pause in between each speaker.
 - When everyone in the group who wishes to speak has done so, take another minute of silence to honor and reflect upon what has been shared.
 - Each group discusses together for a few minutes.
 - Debrief the question and discussion together as a whole group.

- Discussion Guidelines:
 - Take some time to read through the following suggested guidelines. Ask those in the group if they agree with the guidelines, or wish to alter or add to them? Use those guidelines that all in the group agree to observe.
 - Suggested Guidelines:

Do	Don't
Make your comments BRIEF	Interrupt
LISTEN to everyone	Speak twice until everyone has spoken. If you find yourself wanting to interrupt, first REFLECT!!!! What is it that YOU care about so deeply that makes you want to trespass on another's time to speak?
Be curious about what others say	
Listen for the Wisdom: suspend judgment and criticism	
Tell <i>your own story</i>	Try to:
Acknowledge the validity of others' stories and experiences	Fix
	Save
Avoid Confrontation: Invite, Don't Fight	Advise
Reflect, Don't React	Challenge...Anyone

- Skits

When studying the Practice Chapters (Chapters 5-9), consider splitting into groups of 4-5 people to create a skit based on one of topics. Skits can bring energy, excitement,

creativity, and a greater depth of understanding to participants.

- Select a topic from the chapter being reviewed. Give each group 15 minutes to discuss and prepare a skit that illustrates the issue selected.
 - Group members are instructed to listen intently to each other and share in the development and performance of the skit.
- Each small group then performs their skit for the entire large group, who are instructed to be fully present, listen closely, and pay attention to facial expressions and body language.
- Following the performances, a large-group discussion is held about what was observed and learned from each presentation.

See the topic suggestions for skits in the appropriate chapter section of this study guide..

Chapter 1: Listening: Generating the Possible

1. Do I consider myself a good listener? Why, or why not?
2. Reflect on your own listening history.
 - a. Think of a time that you were *not* listened to: recall the circumstance and scene in as much detail as possible. List what you notice. How did this make you feel?
 - b. Think of a time when you *were* listened to without judgment, interruption, or advice: Recall the circumstance and scene in as much detail as possible. List what you notice. How did this make you feel?
 - c. Compare these two lists. Think about which you offer yourself or another when you “listen”
3. How conscious of my own presence and participation am I when in conversation with others? To what degree am I intentionally making choices about how to listen and respond?

What one step can I take within the next day or two in order to be a more “just” listener?

Chapter 2: Listening Into a New Way of Being: The Evidence

1. In conversation, do I attempt to convince others of the ‘rightness’ or superiority of my viewpoint? Why? What response does this elicit from my conversation partner(s)?
2. Do I often give unsolicited advice? How do I feel when I am the recipient of such advice?
3. Do I feel heard, emotionally felt, and understood in my relationships? In the same way, do I believe that the people in my life feel heard in their interactions with me? What would they say if I asked them this question?

4. When have I experienced or witnessed the healing power of listening?
5. What is my experience of listening to the more-than-human world? What, if anything, have I observed and learned? How has it changed me?

Chapter 3: Listening Justly: Foundational Values

1. Which of the foundational values of listening justly stands out to me the most? Why?
2. How can internalizing and practicing these values make a difference in my listening?
3. How specifically do I embody and express these values in my life? In my daily conversations?
4. Which voices do I center in my personal life? My professional life? Whose do I minimize or ignore, and why?

Chapter 4: Listening Praxis

1. To what extent is listening praxis part of my own communication style? (I speak, observe the interaction, reflect, learn, internalize and act upon my reflection).

Chapter 5: The Heart of Listening: Self Reflection

1. Reflection This chapter explores inner listening by way of self-reflection. Do I already practice self-reflection and if not, do I wish to start? Why?
2. What have I learned by reading this chapter, if anything, that I can apply in your life today to be a more just listener? What can help me listening to myself?
3. What is my relationship to Silence? Have I experienced generative silence? Have I experienced weaponized Silence? How does my experience influence my choice to practice silence (or not) in my conversations?
4. Recall a time when you listened to yourself and then responded out of that awareness. What were the consequences of listening to yourself? Please tell a *specific* story and-or share a *specific* insight.

5. Skit topic suggestions

- Reactive (non-self reflective) conversations
- Multitasking/Distracted Listening

Chapter 6: Waking Up: Identifying Listening Hurdles

1. Am I aware of my own inner chatterbox in the midst of conversations? How might this distort what I hear?

2. What assumptions about others do I make in conversations? What socio-cultural dynamics am I already aware of? What in this chapter expanded my awareness of my own beliefs and possible biases?
3. When reading through the list of egoic behaviors on pages 50-51, who came to mind? Which of these behaviors do I engage in? Why? What concrete steps can I take to become more mindful of my interactions and let these behaviors go?
4. How aware am I of my own interactions with others as an extrovert or introvert? How can I make space in my interactions for all voices to be heard?
5. Skit topic suggestions:
 - a. Egoic Listening/Speaking
 - b. Cultural assumptions
 - c. Power Dynamics
 - d. Body Language and Nonverbals
 - e. Extroverts and Introverts

Chapter 7 : Reflection Not Reaction: Responding Wholeheartedly

1. What is my own interactive style: Do I ask questions that: are actually opinions? Give advice? Make assumptions about others behaviors or beliefs? Attempt to 'win' or convince others?
2. When in the recent past did I become defensive in a conversation? Why? What topics. Circumstances, or people 'hook' me into a defensive or argumentative posture? Why?
3. Which of the common responses described on pages 66-68 do I utilize? Is this intentional or unconscious? Why do I respond in these ways? What might the impact of such responses be?
3. Which, of any, of the "responding" practices suggested in this chapter have I tried? If so, what is my experience with them? If not, which open-question suggestions would you like to try in the next week?
4. Skit topic suggestions
 - a. Misunderstandings arising from not being in the same kind of conversation, e.g. debate vs dialogue
 - b. Habitual, unskillful responses
 - c. Trying to fix or change another, or giving unsolicited advice.

Chapter 8: Listening to Our Inner Guidance: Self Care

1. Do I find myself enmeshed and exhausted by the circumstances of others' lives, the state of the world, etc? What energetic boundaries do I need to respect in myself and my conversation partners?

2. Do I enter into conversations when I am unable to focus and be Present? What personal practice can I embrace to prevent this?
3. How do I process negative and toxic energy when it arises in a conversation? Which of the Self-Care Micropractices (pages 80-83) do I want to incorporate into my interpersonal communication?
4. Imagine how taking care of myself can be healing for me, others, and the world. What concretely would this look like? Be specific. How would being intentional and conscious in my listening and communication benefit me, others, the world?
5. Skit topic suggestions:
 - a. Conversations when parties are unable to be present: distracted, unfocused, in pain, irritated.
 - b. A conversation where people are claiming their own need for rest or boundaries amidst pressure to engage.

Chapter 9: Listening in Community: Transforming Harm and Doing Justice

1. When pondering the story of Alaxchiihish (Plenty Coups) that begins this chapter, reflect on the chickadee as a model of listening, learning, and adapting. How can I incorporate this pattern into my own life and listening?
2. In conflictual interactions, do I practice listening to every voice without blame, shame, or judgment and encourage others to do the same? What is my Inner Monologue in conflictual conversations?
3. What are my beliefs and values relative to repairing harm caused by another person? Do I unconsciously or even intentionally act out of an impulse for punishment? Retribution? Is this the same framework I want applied in situations where I have caused the harm? Why or Why not?
4. Do I take responsibility for my own mistakes, misunderstandings, and reactivity? Do I make amends when I have caused hurt or harm?
5. How might I apply the ideas articulated in this chapter in my own life?

Chapter 10: Listening and Possibility: The Transformed World

1. When faced with the issues confronting our world, where do I envision that the solutions lie? What is my role?
2. Do I agree with the premise of this book, reiterated here, that an essential component of the answer lies with us, as individuals and communities, listening justly? Why, or why not?
3. What role does our imagination play in realizing the world we want to live in? Do I regularly access my own imagination and creativity? How might I do so moving forward?

4. How can I play and have fun with these concepts and practices? After reading this book, what steps do I resolve to take, if any, to make our world a better place, one conversation at a time?