

Listening

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, January 2012
Rev. Margie Allen and Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson (The Rev. Glenn H. Turner, adapted)

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting (Raymond Baughan)

I like to talk with you.

I like the way I feel
when you are listening
as if we were exploring
something in ourselves:

The plunge into a silence
and how you come up with words
I tried to find:

The otherness about us which makes
conversation possible.

When I talk with you,
the give turns into take
and borrow into lend.

Now and then, a phrase from you
will kindle like a shooting star;
the mornings in you rouse me from a sleep.

I like the babble and the banter when I greet you
at the door,
and when the room is filled with guests,
your quiet look,
as if there were a secret between us
of which nobody knows.

Check-in

Introduction to the Topic (Ralph Roughton)

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk or do - just hear me.

Advice is cheap. 10 cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper. (That dates this writing.)

And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people -- because God is mute and he/she doesn't give advice or try to fix things. "They" just listen and let you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you."

Quotes

Guiding Questions

1. Can you think of a time when you felt truly heard in speaking to another person? What image comes to mind when you think of that time? What feelings do you remember having? Is there anything you would like to say to this "great listener" out loud right now, maybe something you wish you had said at the time?
2. What do you wish people would do or say more often as they are listening to you? (Examples?)
3. What most gets in your way when you are trying to simply listen well to someone? (Examples?)
4. Would you like to share any reflections on the "Intro to the Topic" piece above that have not already been mentioned?
5. Are there things we might do in this group to improve the quality of listening?

Likes and Wishes

Closing Words

Too communicate is the beginning of understanding.

To feel is the beginning of self-growth.

To touch is the beginning of involvement.

To love, the beginning of all that will ever be.

(Nancy Ceranowicz)

“Listening” (January 2012) **Quotes**

There are people who, instead of listening to what is being said to them, are already listening to what they are going to say themselves. ~ Albert Guinon

Listen. Do not have an opinion while you listen because frankly, your opinion doesn't hold much water outside of Your Universe. Just listen. Listen until their brain has been twisted like a dripping towel and what they have to say is all over the floor.
~ Hugh Elliot

So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it. ~ Jiddu Krishnamurti

Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk. ~Doug Larson

Listening is such a simple act. It requires us to be present, and that takes practice, but we don't have to do anything else. We don't have to advise, or coach, or sound wise. We just have to be willing to sit there and listen. ~Margaret J. Wheatley

Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable. ~David Augsburger

Listening is not merely not talking, though even that is beyond most of our powers; it means taking a vigorous, human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like a splendid auditorium where every sound comes back fuller and richer. ~Alice Miller

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.
~Edith Wharton

Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. ~Karl Menninger

To listen is to continually give up all expectation and to give our attention, completely and freshly, to what is before us. To listen is to lean in, softly, with a willingness to be changed by what we hear. ~Mark Nepo

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. ~Winston Churchill

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words. ~ Rachel Naomi Remen