

# INNER GROWTH THROUGH LISTENING

*From a Rosicrucian manuscript*



Many conversations are just alternating monologues and we could, in most situations, ask ourselves if there is any real listening going on. Many of today's challenges are caused by people talking and giving their opinions while not listening to what others have to say. Effective communication not only encompasses speaking to others, it also involves a huge element of listening.

Many of us do not listen properly to each other, nor do we even listen to ourselves. How often do we thoughtfully, attentively listen to another, refraining from presenting our ideas until the speaker has finished outlining his or her own views? When you really analyze it, you will no doubt come to the conclusion that this occurs far less often than one would have thought at first. Few of us listen beyond words to the truth of the situation, namely to what the person is really trying to say rather than just the words he or she is using.

This condition is not surprising when we consider the negligible amount of instruction provided in listening, the lack of developmental listening programs in most schools, and the inherent complexity of the listening art. It is especially not surprising when one considers the arrogant approach we see in all high-profile areas of life, especially the corporate and entertainment sectors. Scientific studies indicate that listening skills can be taught and that listening ability improves substantially when instruction is provided. In addition, listening instruction also produces improvement in reading and language usage. Not everyone is a poor listener. We have all at one time or another in life known at least one warm-hearted, receptive person to whom we could turn in time of need and be listened to.

Good listening involves silence; creative, meaningful silence. In the course of our lives, silence sadly seems to play such a small part that we rarely experience it. When any two people come together, the necessity for expression

becomes almost compulsive. If neither is actively talking, the atmosphere seems unnatural, uncomfortable. Ideas that have no time to mature are spilled forth, one overlapping another in the urge to leave no single moment empty of verbal expression. Much incomplete thinking gets into circulation as a result, and more importantly, reservoirs of potentially helpful ideas are bottled up and left undeveloped because a hastily conceived thought has been flung out to fill a gap in conversation.

What is involved in becoming a better listener, and how do we begin? A good listener must be a warm and friendly person with a basic affection for people, a great capacity for understanding and compassion, and an ability and willingness to care enough to become involved. We seldom have to tell people that we care about them. By the way we listen, they know, and if we care, they are helped. Caring is affection, and affection has an influence on both the mind and body.

We may not happen to love every person we find ourselves listening to, however a sense of kindness is needed. If we listen with genuine kindness, our interest and concern show.

Good listeners listen intelligently, trying to understand thoroughly what is being said. They listen with interest and patience. They are constantly aware of the speaker as a fellow member of the human family. If we feel real affection for our friends, their thoughts should be as important to us as they are, so we naturally want to learn what those thoughts are.

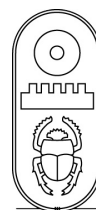
If we listen imaginatively, we soon feel ourselves in the speaker's shoes.

This helps, and so does listening without the sense of eagerly waiting to seize the conversation. We must be willing to withhold comments and concentrate on creating an atmosphere that invites our friend to express his or her own opinions without injecting our thoughts on the subject. Moreover, we should be the kind of listener who can be trusted not to pass on everything they share with us. All this is not easy or quickly accomplished. It is something we grow into as we grow ourselves.

As we become more loving persons, we automatically become better listeners. Once we begin to listen to other people, we also find ourselves listening in other areas. Who among us has not been awed into silence by a walk under the stars on a clear night or on a sunny beach when the wind is high and the surf is rolling in? Being silent at such times proves very rewarding.

There is another realm where we could be better listeners. Few of us listen clearly to what our inner voice has to say. This is the voice that urges us to write that letter or make the phone call of appreciation. Sometimes it tells us it is time to stop what we are doing and take a rest, or it tells us to start immediately with some new project. It tells us what is too much and what is too little. This is the voice that gently chides when we start to criticize a neighbor.

Listening is a means of reception, an inner hearing, in which we hear the messages that come genuinely from the soul. They may be silently heard, or ring like a clear voice speaking, but they are invariably short, clear, incisive, and generally deal with the inner life. Another way of distinguishing them is that they seem to ring true.





In the Rosicrucian teachings many techniques for communicating with the self are given. Here are some of them.

1. Allow your thoughts to roam from time to time. Give yourself permission to enjoy daydreaming or the abstract.

2. Give voice to your inner thoughts. Test them by speaking them out loud instead of dismissing them out of hand.

3. Try your hand at freestyle writing; whatever comes into your head.

4. Practice relaxation, meditation and deep breathing exercises.

5. Devote time each day or every week to keeping a journal. Write down your thoughts, as this leads to new ideas.

6. Be more self-accepting. Don't worry

constantly about how you sound to others. This kind of self-consciousness can censor your intuition before it is able to speak.

7. Spend time in complete silence. The background noise of radio, stereo, TV, and conversation can drown out the quiet voice of intuition.

8. Maintain a creative, positive attitude. Negative thoughts, such as "I'm not creative" or "I can't solve this problem" may leave no room for intuition to work.

As your ability to listen continues to develop, you'll find yourself a more effective person in the home, business, community, etc., and for the rest of your life.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand;  
they listen with the intent to reply."

Steven Covey,  
author of *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People:*  
*Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*