

USG SGM ~ Deep Listening ~ October, 2020

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements
www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



What Does It Mean To Be A People of Deep Listening?

That old story about the cricket and coins comes to mind. Two people are walking down a busy city street. Everyone is rushing to and from their work, trying to get ahead. One of the friends turns to the other and says, "Do you hear that? It's a cricket!" The other friend responds with doubt, but after focusing his attention finally hears it. "Wow," he says, "How did you hear that cricket with all the noise around us?" His friend responds, "It's all about how I was raised, about what I was taught to listen for." He goes on, "Here, I'll show you something." The friend then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handful of coins - nickels, quarters, dimes - and he drops them on the sidewalk. Everyone who was rushing by stops... to listen.

Again friends, we must remember this: We don't have conversations, we are our conversations. Who and what we listen to is who and what we become. May this month, and our time together, help us take one more step toward listening our way into being.

Spiritual Exercise: Listen to a Photo

Part of deep listening is paying close attention to "the issues." But sometimes the most important voices and messages come from paying close attention to images. One of the most powerful and provocative images to arise from the Black Lives Matter protests was the 2016 picture of Leshia Evans at the protests in Baton Rouge, Louisiana after the death of Alton Sterling.

Unrest in Baton Rouge: Anatomy of a Photo www.wnyc.org/story/unrest-baton-rouge/

One of the things that makes this picture so powerful and important is the way its meaning has evolved as people have listened to each other's reactions to it. For instance, the first reactions to it were like this one from a Twitter post: "Grace, Beauty, Defiance, Strength: Behold Lady Liberty!" But after such affirming responses, Leshia Evans felt she needed to add another perspective to the conversation. She lifted up the photo's limits and dangers, saying, "It's safe... It is the color book version of the truth." So, using this article which contains a podcast and a poem about the picture, take some time this month to listen deeply to this iconic photo. Come to your group ready to share the many ways it spoke to you.

Chalice Lighting

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

Check-in *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Forget everything you've ever done.

Make no comparisons. Simply listen.

Listen with your eyes, as if the story you are hearing is happening right now.

Listen without blinking, as if a move might frighten the truth away forever...

Your whole life might depend on what you hear. *Joyce Sutphen*

To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments, statements, or declarations. True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known. They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept. *Henri Nouwen*

One of my patients told me that when she tried to tell her story people often interrupted her to tell her that they once had something just like that happen to them. Subtly her pain became a story about themselves. Eventually she stopped talking to most people. It was just too lonely. *Rachel Naomi Remen*

There is a quality of listening that is possible among a circle of human beings, who by their attentiveness to one another create a space in which each person is able to give voice to the truth of his or her life. There is the miracle of authentic narrative, made possible by listening that holds still long enough to let our truth be told. *Rebecca Parker*

Listening is something that changes the person who is speaking. It can be an encouragement. It can be that this openness can resonate in others, so that it is a shared openness. So in a way the person speaking is also listening to something that is larger than both of us who are speaking. That is, we're in the embrace of this other that we don't remember. That we're not sensitive to and don't realize that we're a part of—a collective group. *Barry Szigals. He is the lead architect of the new Sandy Hook Elementary School, talking about how listening was an important part of the process of designing the new school in the wake of the tragedy.*

Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can't just be on people of color to deal with it. It's up to all of us – Black, white, everyone – no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets. *Michelle Obama*

Questions

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is "yours." Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"?

1. Who listened to you when you most needed it? Who first gave you the gift of deep listening?
2. How has your listening needed to change as you've grown older?
3. Have you forgiven yourself for failing to listen?
4. What gets in your way the most: The noise of the world? The noise of your worries? The noise of our wounds?

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Singing The Sound of Silence, Paul Simon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzsaE68IfXI&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP6D6LnHTjKRBiqVGmWd-Ww&index=12&t=0s>

Extinguishing the Chalice The first duty of love is to listen. *Paul Tillich*