

Listen with All of You

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ***

When your partner or anyone close to you is speaking to you,
Whether telling you a story, lodging a complaint, or sharing a
feeling,

Give your undivided attention.

Listen with all of you:

With your ears, with your heart, with your skin, with your
breath.

Pay attention so completely that everything else disappears.

Listen not only to the words,

But to the mysterious presence from which those words arise.

Listen to the sound of the voice, to the inflections.

Listen to the silence between the words.

Listen to what was not said, but can still be sensed.

In giving absolute attention,

Become the beloved for which the heart has always longed.

Be available in this way for as long as is practical.

Then give love and blessings

And move on with your day.

Whenever you are able to listen,

Listen with all of you.

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We live in a multitasking nation. We cook while we talk while we
have an ear out for what's on the news. We drive while we check

messages on the cell phone while we mumble perfunctory grunts to what someone is telling us. The most you can hope to receive when you are half-listening is information. Then, when the other person accuses you of not really being there, you can conveniently say, “Yes I am. You just told me that you went shopping today, and you bought avocados.” You are off the hook; the charges are dropped; the trial is acquitted. But that acquittal is a booby prize. Everyone loses. Real communication is abandoned.

This way of spreading attention over a wide array of stimuli is a primary cause of stress, and also deprives us of being fully satisfied by any of it. As we slide through interactions by making the correct kinds of grunting sounds at the right time, we also deprive those speaking to us of what they most crave: full attention.

When you listen completely, with nothing else going on, it becomes more than listening. If you give your full attention, the person before you becomes fascinating, multidimensional, no matter how mundane his or her topic may be. When you stop everything and bring yourself fully to another person, a little bit will go a long way. This is what everyone is longing for: it is immensely nourishing to be fully received, even for a few minutes at a time.

You do not need to do this practice all the time in order for it to bring huge benefit not only to you as the listener, but to the person speaking to you also. If you are not immediately available, ask for a few minutes. Then listen with totality: five or ten minutes will often be enough.

In this, everyone moves closer to Oneness.