

Sound Source

Sonic reflections from Gary Diggins

The Practice of Listening

Blame it on the trickster in me. We were 30 strangers circulating in a seminar space, getting to know one another before the formal process started. The stock question, “*So what do you do, Gary?*” was starting to irritate me as much as my pat answer. When a rather conservative looking woman trotted out the “*what do you do*” line for the umpteenth time, I couldn’t resist. Out came the trickster.

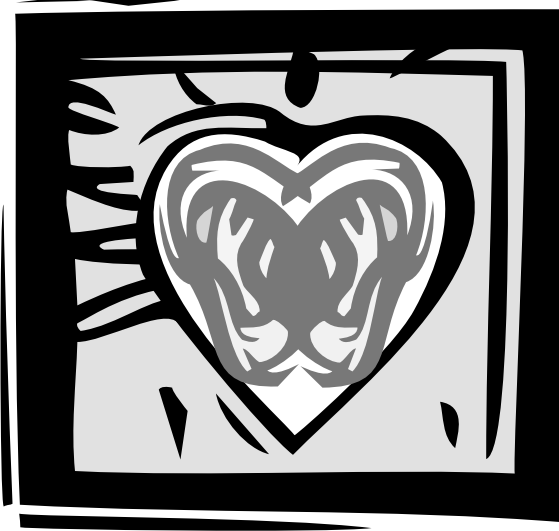
“I listen.”

“Pardon me?”

“What I DO is listen.”

A sprightly smile crossed her face and, within seconds, we were enjoying an animated conversation about the multi-leveled nature of listening, from the verbal to the vibrational. Soon I was giving her the name of a friend of mine in Scotland who helps resolve conflicts, mediate radical change, or facilitate visioning sessions under the title “*Listening Convener*”.

Sure, most of us have jobs, callings, or vocations that comprise what we DO in the world. Work is how we generate a livelihood. Yet, even if



your gig is running silent retreats, the discipline of listening probably composes a significant part of your responsibilities. We employ our ears full time.

Whether in the workplace, or in the intricacies of family life, or the intimacies of friendships, the caliber of our interpersonal relationships is highly affected by whether or not we regard another human being with respect, care, generosity, and acceptance. One of the most tangible ways to demonstrate consideration for another person is through mindful and empathic listening.

What I’m saying is nothing new. It’s common knowledge, and even common sense, that intentional listening cultivates improved relationships. However, what we don’t always believe or trust, with conviction, is that deep listening is a powerful practice for social and spiritual change. In this regard, I propose that we each tape the following reminder onto our refrigerator: LISTEN FOR A CHANGE. The statement has a double meaning. One interpretation addresses our human tendency

to use our oral skills more than our aural skills. The second meaning suggests that we can incline our ears (and our hearts) to an internal/external process that heralds anything from a small shift to a big transformation.

I welcome opportunities to deepen my own listening practice with many of you. I may put myself out into the world as a musician, a facilitator, or a counselor but, primarily, I am a listener. Along with you, I am listening for a change.

G. Diggins

(((For further information on events or workshops, please contact Gary Diggins at:)))
(416) 482-2783; e-mail: gdiggins@aol.com