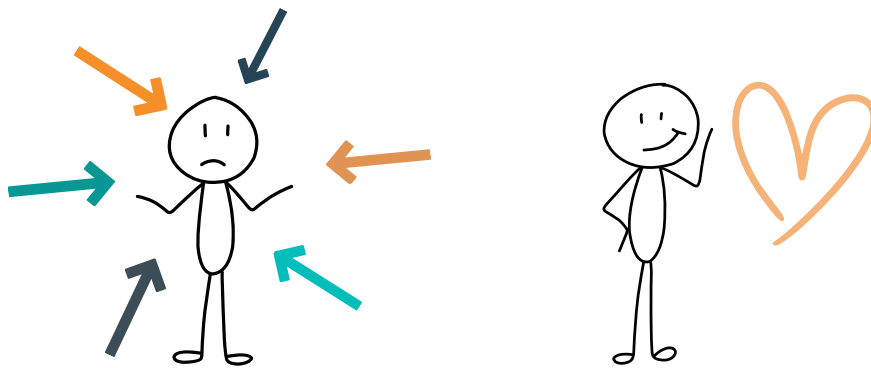


The Art of Listening Inward

We are “always listening,” yet **seldom** do we listen inward. By turning our attention inward, we can unlock insights, intuition, and a greater sense of alignment.

Building awareness allows us to hear in layers, recognize the filters that shape our perceptions, and discern what we hear, intuit, or disregard. Listening, both externally and internally, is not just about sounds; it is about accessing deeper data and uncovering layers of understanding that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Understanding these filters—what we tune out, disregard, or ignore—is a crucial step. By sharpening our ability to listen with intention, we can cultivate a richer, more nuanced awareness of ourselves and the world around us.



Listening

Too often, listening gets reduced to simply hearing others. But listening is one of our most vital senses can attune us not only to what’s said, but to what’s meant. And yet, we rarely engage with the same intentionality we bring to seeing, touching, or moving.

Listening is key, yet often it is below the surface of our awareness. Moving beyond “hearing” (how we typically describe auditory stimuli), listening serves as a gateway to deep understanding and knowing. It encompasses.

Why Listening Is Challenging

We are rewarded for listening outwards to others even when we know hat we should listen inward, don’t.

- **Old Habits:** We often listen in predictable, familiar ways that limit our awareness.
- **Busy-ness:** The demands of daily life can lead to surface-level listening.
- **Limited Bandwidth:** In a world full of distractions, we may only listen halfway.
- **Filtering:** We tend to hear what we expect or want to hear, often missing vital information.
- **Blocking:** We may tune out difficult information, even when it’s essential for growth

Understanding External vs. Internal Listening



External Listening

- Trained to recognize layers of communication, such as:
 - What is being said.
 - The emotions behind the words.
 - Underlying themes or issues.
- Curiosity is key: What might the speaker be seeing or feeling?



Internal Listening

- Rarely do we hear what is emerging from within ourselves.
- This involves:
 - Tuning into our thoughts and feelings.
 - Understanding our desires and needs.
 - Listening to our bodies to interpret our emotional states.
- Recognizing signs, patterns, and themes within ourselves can provide valuable insights, but we often overlook them due to busyness.

PRACTICE EXTERNAL LISTENING: WHAT'S AROUND YOU?

External listening is about paying attention to the world outside of you. It helps you connect with your environment, your interactions, and the world around you.



Close In: What's directly around you?

immediate noise (fingers tapping on keys).



Midway Out: What's happening in the room or space you're in?

environment in the room (air vents, side conversations)



Far Out: What's happening in the broader world around you?

broader context (weather patterns, city bustle).

PRACTICE INTERNAL LISTENING: WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE YOU?

Internal listening is a way to connect with your inner world. It involves being aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and the subtle messages your body and mind are sending you.



Close In: What is your soul or intuition saying?

Internal chatter (to-do's, anxieties, pressures).



Midway In: What are your longings or desires?

Longings and desires.



Far In: What is your inner chatter telling you?

Deep soul voice, what your soul is saying to you.

INNER REFLECTION

"I just do what I'm told. I'm focused on executing."

What's behind that? "I've stopped giving input because it feels like no one's listening."

What's below that? "I feel hurt, possibly invisible or undervalued, showing up with resignation."

Curiosity prompts:

- What's behind these layers?
- What am I deeply craving?
- What am I curious about?

Ways of Listening

Interestingly, the auditory sense has few words beyond "listening" or "hearing." Building our auditory acuity expands our sensory awareness, enabling us to hear, notice, and sense different nuances in our surroundings. This involves calibrating our experiences through:

Looking / Seeing / Noticing / Observing

Pay attention to how we use sight to enhance our listening experience. Noticing visual cues can deepen our understanding of the conversation.

Listening Through the Body

Calibration of sensations through vibrations and feelings. You might hear something that triggers a physical response, such as uneasiness in your gut or a quickening heartbeat.

Listening to Vibration

Explore the healing benefits of music and sound, tuning into vibrations we rarely acknowledge. This could lead to changes in our physiology and focus, as discussed in the book *Your Brain on Art*.



REFLECTING ON YOUR LISTENING

Start by asking yourself a few questions that help you become more aware of your listening patterns:

- Where is your listening focused externally?
 - Are you tuned into the world around you, or is your focus more on internal thoughts and emotions?
- Where is your listening focused internally?
 - Are you hearing your own internal chatter, or are you aware of the deeper, quieter layers of your desires and emotions?
- What is your default mode of listening?
 - Do you tend to listen mostly to the external world, or do you lean more into your internal thoughts and feelings?
- What layers might you be missing?
 - Is there a deeper layer of listening—either external or internal—that you're overlooking?

CREATING SPACE FOR LISTENING



Reduce distractions—both external and internal

- Turn down external noise: Limit input like background stimuli, podcasts, or endless notifications.
- Quiet internal chatter: Address self-criticism, judgment, or mental noise that clouds your attention.
- Curate physical space: Surround yourself with a calm, clean environment. A tidy home or serene hotel room, for example, can foster focus and receptivity.



Visual Listening

- Engage your sense of sight to complement and enrich your auditory understanding:
- Observe body language, facial expressions, and gestures.
- Consider how visual cues align with what you hear.
- Reflect on how these observations shape your interpretation of conversations or situations.



Listening Through the Body

- Internal listening invites you to connect
- Feelings and desires: Notice emotions and what they reveal about your needs.
- Bodily sensations: Pay attention to energy levels, tension, or comfort as signals of alignment or misalignment.
- Patterns and themes: Reflect on recurring thoughts or sensations that carry meaning.

Ideas into Action



AWARENESS:

- Where is your listening focused externally?
- Where is it focused internally?
- What is your default listening mode?
- What layers might you be missing?

ACTIVATION:

- Create a daily log to track listening.
- In conversations, notice what's happening in yourself and in others.
- Intentionally expand your inner awareness.

AGILITY BUILDING:

- Rotate between listening modes—close, midway, and far out—to adapt to different scenarios and contexts.
- Invite colleagues or peers to provide input on how effectively you listen in meetings or personal interactions. Adjust based on their observations.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Calibrate on objectives (i.e. increasing engagement during team discussions or reducing distractions during one-on-one meetings).
- Monitor changes in relationships, decision-making quality, and personal insights as you enhance your listening skills.

INTEGRATE/ACCELERATE:

- As experiment with group listening exercises.
- Integrate creative modalities like art and music for insight generation.
- Note the moments where listening has led to breakthroughs, stronger connections, or personal clarity.

Every moment is an opportunity to connect—more deeply with others, more fully with the world, and more authentically with yourself. True listening isn't just hearing; it's an act of presence, curiosity, and courage.

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