

THE POWER OF LISTENING

Taken and adapted from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/surviving-your-childs-adolescence/201904/the-power-parental-listening-their-adolescent#:~:text=Listening%20provides%20companionship%3A%20You%20become,burdened%20by%20what%20you%20hear>.

Just for a moment, consider a few of the many functions of listening.

Listening is a gift: You offer your attention.
Listening shows interest: You are curious to know what will be said.
Listening is availability: You make time to hear what someone has to say.
Listening is affirming: You treat the speaker as having something worth saying.
Listening provides companionship: You become a partner in communication.
Listening helps process experience: You encourage talking out what is going on.
Listening creates vulnerability: You may feel burdened by what you hear.
Listening is supportive: You share the impact of what is said.
Listening makes public: You allow the private to be confided.
Listening is trusted: The speaker risks being known.
Listening is uncritical: The speaker feels accepted at the moment.
Listening enables intimacy: Personal sharing deepens the relationship.
Listening is educational: Hearing what others say teaches a lot.

Of course, listening isn't always easy for us to do. For example, it can be hard to listen to when:

Your mind is already made up;
You don't want to hear what is being told;
You must interrupt what you're busily doing.
You are feeling in a hard emotional place;
You feel too tired to attend;
You think you've heard this all before;
You are upset by what is told;
You are impatient to get action taken;
You feel offended or accused;
You feel worried or threatened.

So: important as listening is, particularly in sustaining caring relationships, it is often complicated and challenging to do. And this is true for all four kinds of listening.

Active listening: "I really want to understand."

Reflective listening: "This is what I heard you say."

Empathetic listening: "I feel the feelings you describe."

Interpretative listening: "It sounds like what you experienced long ago."

Listening is being there. Or best said, by deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie: "listening is a form of touch."

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What are the three main things that I feel keep me from “being still” in my daily life (personal relationships, work, school, etc.)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What about the three main things in my spiritual/prayer life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What am I most afraid of, or anxious about, when encountering a young person/young people?

What do I enjoy most about encountering a young person/young people? Do I thank God for this?

Do I thank God for myself, including my strengths, limitations, anxieties, dreams, etc.?

Am I more of a “Martha” or a “Mary”? How can I use that to my advantage?

What are some ways I can practice “being still” spiritually? What about physically?

What’s one thing I want to improve about my interactions with others? Do I ask the Holy Spirit to renew His gifts in me, so that might work at becoming better?

If you like, sit in prayer for a moment and, in the space below, write a personal prayer that you can keep with you as you continue in your relational ministry.