

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLfXpRkVZal&t=112s>

FOUR LEVELS OF LISTENING – OTTO SCHARMER

Listening - from all leadership capacities - probably is the one that's most underrated. Everyone talks about vision and about this and about that, but listening is really at the source of all great leadership.

Whenever I see leadership failures and these days we have many occasions to do that very often that the source of leadership failure is what its lack of listening its lack of connecting with what's really going on in reality right now it's a disconnection between leaders on the one hand and the situation on the ground on the other.

So listening really is a core skill not only for leadership but really for all, for all domains of mastery, of professional mastery so we all practice listening 16 plus hours a day so it's not something you know that we only engage with every now and then and it is as important for our professional work as it is for our personal professional life as it is for our personal life.

So I observe listening for many years and I came up with a very simple distinction which is four different levels of listening.

Tegner første circle – Listening 1 - Downloading

So here's the first level the first level is basically listening by what I call Downloading. Downloading is basically that from your habits kind of you listen to what you already know and the result oh no no not that this is a surprise. But the result of course in that case is that you reconfirm what you already know you reconfirm your opinions and judgments.

This first level of listening – downloading. This circle here represents the totality of what I know kind of it's there that the black circle is the boundary of my organization kind of my concept, kind of everything we I know, and the red dot is the place from where my listen happens. So when I listen from the center of my own prison what is it that I recognize what is it that I am listening. Do I pay attention to what I already know. It's like projecting my own slides on the wall so I am in a closed room all the windows are closed all the curtains are down and everything I see is limited what I am projecting kind of my own concepts, my own slides what I am projecting onto the wall.

I'm not saying what you are projecting is not good or not appropriate all. I'm saying it's not what's really going on outside it's kind of a result from your experiences of the past. It's reflecting the past not the present moment and it's kind of that you project onto the wall. That's listening one. The outcome is we reconfirm what we already know.

Listening 2 – Factual Listening

The essence of factual listening is that we access, we notice what's different. The outcome is that we notice disconfirming data, we notice what is actually different from what I expected to see.

Charles Darwin was known to always have a notepad on him where he would write down observations that contradicted his theory because he knew he knew exactly what our mind is doing when we notice something that doesn't fit our theory, is in contradiction with that our mind, is overtime getting rid of everything that's not confirming what we expect to see.

But he knew that this confirming data is actually the source of innovation so that's why he wrote that down. It helped him to evolve his own theory.

So here what factor listening is. It's you get up you go to the window, you open the curtain and you actually look what's going on outside. You watch what's going on outside. That's factual Listening. That is what we trained in all good science. Good science is notice the disconfirming data but for all of you for all of us who deal with complex social change processes this is not good enough there are two additional sources of listening that are very critical and that need now our skills an intentional skill development.

Listening 3 – Empathic listening

The third level is empathic listening. It's listening with an open heart as an organ of perception which leads to seeing the situation through the eyes of another and which also leads an emotional connection to the other person that's not going away very quickly.

Empathic listening is allowing you to step to connect with the experience of another person and when I asked a cognitive psychologist what really is happening here when you access this deeper way of operating, she said listening begins to happen from the field or from the other person that you are connecting with. What happens when you're listening begins to happen from the place from where that other person is speaking from. Articulating from that, is listening three.

Listening 4 – Generative listening

Now so far I haven't said anything new. We all know that but doesn't mean that we do it. Here's the one thing that maybe is new and that has to do with the fourth level of listening. Generative listening which requires us to connect with our open world that is our capacity to let go and let come and that leads to connecting with an emerging future possibility that is helping us to connect more fully with our real source of who we are and who we want to be.

You know whether or not you are operating on level 4 listening when you watch your level of energy and when you watch whether or not your sense of self your sense of identity has shifted a little bit towards who the person who you really are, and who you are moving towards.

Examples for level 4 listening is great coaches. A great coach is listening to you. Is listening to me not only in terms of listening to all my struggles and empathizing with them. A great coach is listening to my current struggles in terms of noticing already the arrival of my highest future possibility so connecting seeing in me my tomorrow self, my emerging future self and by paying attention to it helping me to actually connect with that so that's what great educators - that was great leaders do. I don't see you in terms of only your past but I see you in terms of your highest future possibility, and that's kind of what this fourth level of listening is about.

Levels of Listening

LISTENING 1:
FROM HABITS

DOWNLOADING
HABITS OF JUDGMENT

RECONFIRMING OLD
OPINIONS & JUDGMENTS

LISTENING 2:
FROM OUTSIDE

FACTUAL LISTENING
NOTICING DIFFERENCES

OPEN MIND

DISCONFIRMING
NEW DATA

LISTENING 3:
FROM WITHIN

EMPATHIC LISTENING

OPEN HEART

SEEING THROUGH
ANOTHER PERSON'S EYES;
EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

LISTENING 4:
FROM SOURCE

GENERATIVE LISTENING
(FROM THE FUTURE
WANTING TO EMERGE)

OPEN WILL

CONNECTING TO AN
EMERGING FUTURE WHOLE;
SHIFT IN IDENTITY AND SELF