

The Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice

Founder of the Listening Center: **Kay Lindahl**
Illustrations by Amy Schnapper

This book invites you to a different journey and to listen beyond words. It is an Invitation to reflect, illustrate, meditate and practice listening in a spiritual way and to become aware of higher aspects of what is being said. The presentation of this book is done in a very creative way, which stimulates visual awareness and inner awareness. Listening is presented in different ways in this publication and the reader is being introduced to listening that is much more than just hearing words.

This book can be a very helpful tool for mediators because it fosters undivided attention that happens while being present. The author suggests following special guidelines when reading this book.

- Settle down in a quiet space.
- Slowly read one reflection.
- Gaze at the circle illustration for that reflection for a few minutes.
- Allow your mind to consider what you see and read from different perspectives.
- Notice where your heart leads you.
- Stay in the silence for a few minutes.
- Create a specific intention for improving your listening practice.
- Express gratitude for your experience.

This book offers a different access to yourself and allows you to experience listening to yourself, your heart and to others in a broader and different spectrum.

The author speaks about the importance and the cherishing of the circle of life (p. 6-8) and with this the acceptance and the experience of the “now”. Listening is about the present moment and the full awareness of what and how something is said; the past and the future do not matter. Essential skills for creating relationships that lead to mutual respect, dialogue, understanding, and peace are learning how to listen to and speak to one another.

Lindahl and Schnapper present forty short chapters of practice and reflection of ‘the Sacred Art of Listening’. The following is a summary of the first chapter.

1. Qualities of Deep Listening

Listening for essence (p. 11)

In the first reflection, the creative force of listening is presented with a vivid example of a person who seem to need to talk. This person goes on and on, in a very superficial, nervous manner. This person might not have been listened to and it takes patience to listen to the person long enough until he or she gets to his or her center point of tranquility and peace. When this situation is reached, there comes awareness that someone was listening and this can be life-changing for people.

Listening is not always easy and it asks for time, skills, and a readiness to slow down, to let go of expectations, judgments, boredom, self-assertiveness, and defensiveness. This chapter also presents the importance of being fully present with the person you are listening to. “*Listening is a creative force that teaches patience.*”

Examples from the 40 chapters include:

3. Using Silence

Listening to access your still point

4. Learning From Experience

Listening for new possibilities

5. Communion

Listening to communicate

8. Seeking Common Ground

Listening to appreciate

9. Common Values

Listening for connection

15. Creating Harmony

Listening for integration

16. Delving Deeper

Listening for insight

19. Hearing Nuances

Listening for each voice

20. Slowing Down

Listening to reflect

22. Assumptions

Listening for clarity

23. Learning from Passion

Listening for vision

25. The Agenda-Free Conversation

Listening with openness

26. Cultural Differences

Listening without prejudice

27. Attention

Listening for perspective

32. Relationships

Listening for deeper connections

34. Practicing Reflection

Listening for the questions

39. Being Yourself

Listening with authenticity

Lindahl, K. & Schnapper, A (2002). *The Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice*. Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing.