

NEW SPIRITUAL PRACTICE GROUP BEGINNING MAY 7, 2018
at Our Antioch Center

Learning to Listen with "The Ear of Your Heart"



*"We need to learn to express words that heal and not that harm."
Barack Obama*

*"Where is the wisdom that was lost in knowledge,
where is the knowledge that was lost in information?"
T.S. Eliot*

*"Where does the center hold?"
William Butler Yeats*

We live in a world that is saturated with words. Often the words we hear are divisive, discordant, dissonant and demeaning. Sometimes these words incite and provoke acts of violence. We are often overwhelmed by the volume of words that come our way through the television media and our electronic devices. In our postmodern world we often have difficulty discerning the claims of "fake news" and opinions from words that are more authentic, real and true. Sometimes we feel we are being manipulated by "media words" that are presented to us for our consumption. Where do we turn to find some semblance of balance and way of communicating that is more centered and grounded? It seems that when we give our attention solely to words and images of our outer world or tune out from the overstimulation, we sense a "loss of soul" or connection to our inner personal lives and our deeper relationships with others.

Spiritual practices of meditation and "deep listening" offer ways of cultivating skills that can help us better cope and respond to these conditions of our age. The place we turn to can be each other, exploring ways of communicating that respect a mutual sharing of words and silences. We can open the "ear of our heart", attuning resonance of souls, and nurturing a deeper intimacy and communion with each other and the "heart of the world." Some spiritual writers have referred to this process as "intersubjective, interspiritual, or interbeing". Maybe it is just a way of simply becoming more human? We have a lot to learn from each other.

*"Watch our thoughts, they become words.
Watch our words they become actions.*

*Watch our actions they become habits.
Watch our habits they become our character.
Watch our character it becomes our destiny"*
Lao Tzu (Taoist sage)

We will be offering Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice using the book, "The Sacred Art of Listening" by Kay Lindahl. These programs will take place from 12:30 to 1:30 pm at the Antioch Center on the following dates:

May 9, 23
June 27
July 11, 25
August 8, 22
September 5, 19

The programs will be facilitated by our Advisory Board member, Randy Thomas with assistance from Susan Batterton. We have purchased 2 copies of the book, "The Sacred Art of Listening", and made them available for you to read at the Antioch Center. Handouts for each session will also be available along with additional supplemental resources.

For those unable to attend the programs, we will send out summaries of each program for your home study.

NINE GUIDELINES FOR LISTENING TO OTHERS

These guidelines were developed by Kay Lindahl, the founder of the Listening Center in Laguan Niguel, California. Kay is also the chairperson of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN).

We include these guidelines here because listening is so vital to any form of dialogue, including interfaith dialogue. These guidelines are designed to facilitate healthy dialogue and deep listening and to create a safe space for meaningful conversation on all levels:

1. **WHEN YOU ARE LISTENING, SUSPEND ASSUMPTIONS** – What we assume is often invisible to us. We assume that others have had the same experiences that we have, and that is how we listen to them. Learn to recognize assumptions by noticing when you get upset or annoyed by something someone else is saying. You may be making an assumption. Let it be – suspend it – and resume listening for understanding of the other.
2. **WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING, EXPRESS YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSE** – informed by your tradition, beliefs and practices as you have interpreted them in your life. Speak for yourself. Use “I” language. Take ownership of what you say. Speak from your heart. Notice how often the phrases “We all”, “of course”, “everyone says”, “you know”, come into your conversation. The only person you can truly speak for is yourself.
3. **LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT** – The purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of the other, not to determine whether they are good, bad, right or wrong. If you are sitting there thinking: “That’s good”, “That’s bad”, “I like that” “I don’t like that”, then you are having a conversation in your own mind, rather than listening to the speaker. Simply notice when you do this, and return to being present with the speaker.
4. **SUSPEND STATUS** – Everyone is an equal partner in the inquiry. There is no seniority or hierarchy. All are colleagues with a mutual quest for insight and clarity. You are each an expert in your life. That is what you bring to the dialogue process.
5. **HONOUR CONFIDENTIALITY** – Leave the names of participants in the room so if you share stories or ideas, no one’s identity will be revealed. Create a safe space for self-expression.
6. **LISTEN FOR UNDERSTANDING, NOT TO AGREE WITH OR BELIEVE** – You do not have to agree with or believe anything that is said. Your job is to listen for understanding.
7. **ASK CLARIFYING OR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS** to assist your understanding and to explore assumptions.
8. **HONOUR SILENCE AND TIME FOR REFLECTION** – Notice what wants to be said rather than what you want to say.

9. **ONE PERSON SPEAKS AT A TIME** – Pay attention to the flow of the conversation. Notice what patterns emerge from the group. Make sure that each person has an opportunity to speak, while knowing that no one is required to speak