



*The Art of Listening*  
pastoral care team training  
september 19, 2010, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

## HOW NOT TO LISTEN

*“When presented with someone’s problems our natural tendency is not to understand. Most of us respond by evaluating, advising, or interpreting before even beginning to understand” (Rod Wilson, How Do I Help a Hurting Friend, 12).*

### Job 4:1-2, 7-9

What about Eliphaz’s speech to Job strikes you as particularly bad pastoral care?

### Job 8:1-6

What about Bildad’s speech to Job strikes you as particularly bad pastoral care?

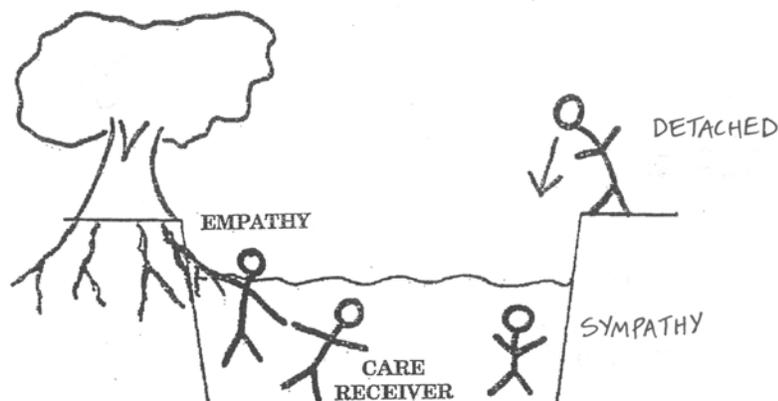
### Job 11:1-7

What about Zophar’s speech to Job strikes you as particularly bad pastoral care?

*\*\*For this material I’m indebted to my Stephen’s Ministry instructor, Carol Johnson, at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley\*\**

## THREE ORIENTATIONS OF LISTENING

1. **Detached** = intellectually identifying with problem, but too detached, withdrawn,
2. **Sympathy** = their problems become my problems. We now have 2 care receivers and no pastoral care giver.
3. **Empathy** = entering into the care receivers problematic situation, grasping her viewpoint and its accompanying emotions, without being swept away or overly moved by the same emotions. Be with the care receiver where he is yet be yourself.





## SYMPATHY AND EMPATHY

*(adapted from William K. Amriott, PhD, North Dakota State U.)*

It is useful to define empathy by contrasting it with another common human emotion - sympathy. It is easy to confuse the two. Often the one changes into the other, and at times both exist together. When a change does occur, the movement is most often from empathy to sympathy rather than the reverse.

**Sympathy** means being affected by or even having the same feeling as the care receiver has. When a care receiver feels like crying, you feel like crying. If he/she feels like celebrating, you feel like celebrating. Sympathy can be a helping emotion, but very often, when tinged with pity, it can cripple a care receiver, weakening the courage, damaging the sense of responsibility, and fostering self-pity rather than a will to get better. When you feel and express emotions like the care receiver, you support and encourage the suffering. The result is two cripples instead of one. Sympathy has its good points and in some circumstances can help the other person. Without sympathy we would not be able to "weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice" (Rom. 12:1). Often it is "just what the doctor ordered." Sympathy is not in itself bad - it has a place in life. However, there are times when it is inappropriate.

**Empathy** means entering into the care receiver's problematic situation, grasping his/her viewpoint and its accompanying emotions, without being swept away or overly moved by the same emotions. If for instance the care receiver is depressed, you can "get in to his/her shoes," see the situation from their point of view, and understand how they feel. That's empathy. Now, if sympathy gets a hold of you, you will soon be feeling depressed along with the care receiver. You'll end up "under the same rock." Then there'll be two depressed people instead of one! What help can you be to the care receiver? Empathy means to "be with" the care receiver. "Where they are" yet, at the same time, to "be yourself" and to minister to them out of your own strengths.

**Sympathy** is something one might even enjoy. It takes no work at all. You just let it happen. **Empathy**, on the other hand, requires discipline, alertness, a constant focus on and ministry to the other person. It requires constant learning about human needs in general. It means purposefully and systematically growing in knowledge of what people are like. Empathy comes into play regardless of whether one likes or dislikes the care receiver. It's a serving function, performed with genuine but disciplined compassion, and always from the perspective of a helper who is constantly aware of whose problem it is - the care receiver's - not the visitor's.



## ACTIVE LISTENING

The purpose of active listening is “to enable a person to make use of you, the listener, to help her [the care receiver] deal with her own needs and grow as a person” (D. Peel, *The Ministry of Listening*, 35).

### 1. Ask questions. Then... LISTEN

Don't say:        *“You had some tests today. How did it go? I can see by the way you look that they were pretty tough on you. I bet you're feeling pretty bad right now. Is there anything I can do to help? Maybe I can get the nurse for you so he can make you more comfortable...?”*

Do say:            *“How are you feeling today?” (And then pause to listen.)*

### 2. Don't ask too many questions.

Don't say:        *“How are you feeling today? Any better than yesterday? Was your physician here today? What did s/he say?”*

Do say:            *“How are you feeling today?” (And then pause to listen.)*

### 3. Listen before being directive.

*Wait for care receiver to ask your opinion and then don't necessarily give it.*

### 4. Avoid quick conclusions.

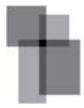
*How can I formulate an opinion if I don't have all the info?  
Why am I so eager to figure it out?*

### 5. Listening... but speaking volumes with your body.

crossed arms/legs  
leaning in or away  
eye contact  
which direction are you facing?

spoken word                   7%  
body posture and gestures 38%  
voice tone and inflection 55%

### 6. Listen with your eyes.



## REFLECTIVE LISTENING

**Restating** → involves repeating, word for word, what the person has just said to you, changing only the pronoun and verb tense.

**Rephrasing** → involves repeating, in your own words, the most important part of what has been said.

### Benefits of reflective listening:

1. It helps the care receiver to hear him/herself.
2. Knowing that you will need to repeat what has been said, you will listen more intently.
3. It lets the care receiver know that you are really listening.
4. It encourages the care receiver to elaborate and expand.
5. It allows the care receiver to correct any misconception before going on.
6. It demonstrates empathy, unconditional love and acceptance.
7. It reduces anxiety in crisis situations.
8. ...

### Example of Reflective Listening Conversation:

**Care Receiver:** *"I just don't know about getting married. I love my fiancé, Jackie, but I'm not sure I can make all those adjustments."*

**Caregiver:** *"You have a great deal of affection for Jackie, but you're worried whether you can handle the changes which will come with marriage?"*

**Care Receiver:** *"Yes, that's right. I'm worried specifically about the new responsibilities in providing for someone else. I want to make her happy, but what if things don't work out the way we planned?"*

**Caregiver:** *"From what you say, you sound worried not only about the new responsibilities of marriage, but also the future of your marriage."*

**Care Receiver:** *"Yeah... I am worried. What if we get divorced, what if we find out that we don't love each other?"*

**Caregiver:** *"You're pretty worried, huh? Sounds like you're kind of disturbed about the future. Tell me some more of your feelings about your relationship with Jackie?"*



**EXERCISE #1: Restate what is said, changing the pronoun and the verb tense, as necessary:**

1. "I have to find a job as soon as possible."
2. "I really don't know what I'm going to do about it."
3. "The doctor promised me I would feel better by now."
4. I'm really not sure what I could say to the children."
5. My boss is going to fire me the next time I'm late."
6. "I think he was trying to make me jealous."
7. "I don't know how I feel about the things my brother said."
8. "I can't stand that kid who makes fun of my son's freckles."

**EXERCISE #2: Rephrase in your own words the most important part of what has been said:**

1. Some of my friends think I'm crazy to even consider taking this job. As long as I don't get emotionally involved, I think I can handle it.
2. My husband never helps me around the house. He is either at work or out with his friends. The children seem to need so much attention from me. Between all their demand and running the house, I never seem to find any time for myself.
3. I didn't go to my doctor appointment because I had planned to take the kids to my sister's house first but the car wouldn't start when I got ready to leave. By the time I got the kids out of the care, called my sister, called the Automobile Association, and calmed down it was too late. The doctor wasn't available by the time I called, so I *still* don't know the results of my tests.
4. My best friend, Becky, rides on Skytrain to work every day and she loves it. She says it gives her time to read and relax. My husband thinks the parking lot at Skytrain is dangerous and would rather I drive. My mom says I should do what I want to do. Now I just can't seem to decide what to do.
5. When I first found out my father needed surgery, I felt really scared and depressed. Then I had an opportunity to go with him to see his doctor last week. After talking to his doctor, I really felt much better about it.
6. My wife wants me to go to Promise Keepers. She keeps telling me how much I would like it if I would just give it a chance. I feel like I'm going to have to go just to get her off my back about it. The truth is I really feel overcommitted and too tired to take on anything new right now.

## INTERPRETIVE LISTENING

Whereas reflective listening helps us focus on the facts, interpretive listening helps us hear the feelings that may not be stated but are there behind the facts.

Two Steps to Interpretive Listening:

1. Listen for and identify the feelings.
2. Share the feelings you have identified.

*“It seems to me you feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Interpretive listening hints:

1. Use empathic lead in phrases (see below)
2. Speak tentatively
3. Avoid the use of loaded words
4. Accept correction
5. Expand your feeling word vocabulary (see below)
6. Observe body language
7. If they're frozen, say what you think you'd feel in their situation

Benefits of interpretive listening:

1. It helps the care receiver identify feelings by putting them into words.
2. You are saying that it is ok to have and express feelings.
3. It gives you a chance to check your perceptions and allows for corrections.
4. It builds trust and rapport.
5. It paves the way to healing.
6. It moves the level of communication beyond the surface.



## **EMPATHIC LEAD IN PHRASES**

You seem to be saying . . . .

As I understand it, you felt. . . .

Listening to you, it seems that . . . .

If I'm hearing you correctly . . . .

To me, it's almost like you're saying . . . .

I sense what you feel . . . .

What I think you're saying is . . . .

I wonder if you're expressing a concern about. . . .

It sounds as if you're feeling . . . .

You seem to place a high value on . . . .

You feel, perhaps. . . .

Your message seems to be . . . .

As I hear it, you seem to be feeling. . . .

You seem to convey a sense of. . . .

The thing you feel most right now is sort of like . . . .

You appear to be saying . . . .

It appears to me . . . .

So, as you see it. . . .

It sounds as if you're indicating that. . . .

I'm picking up that you . . . .

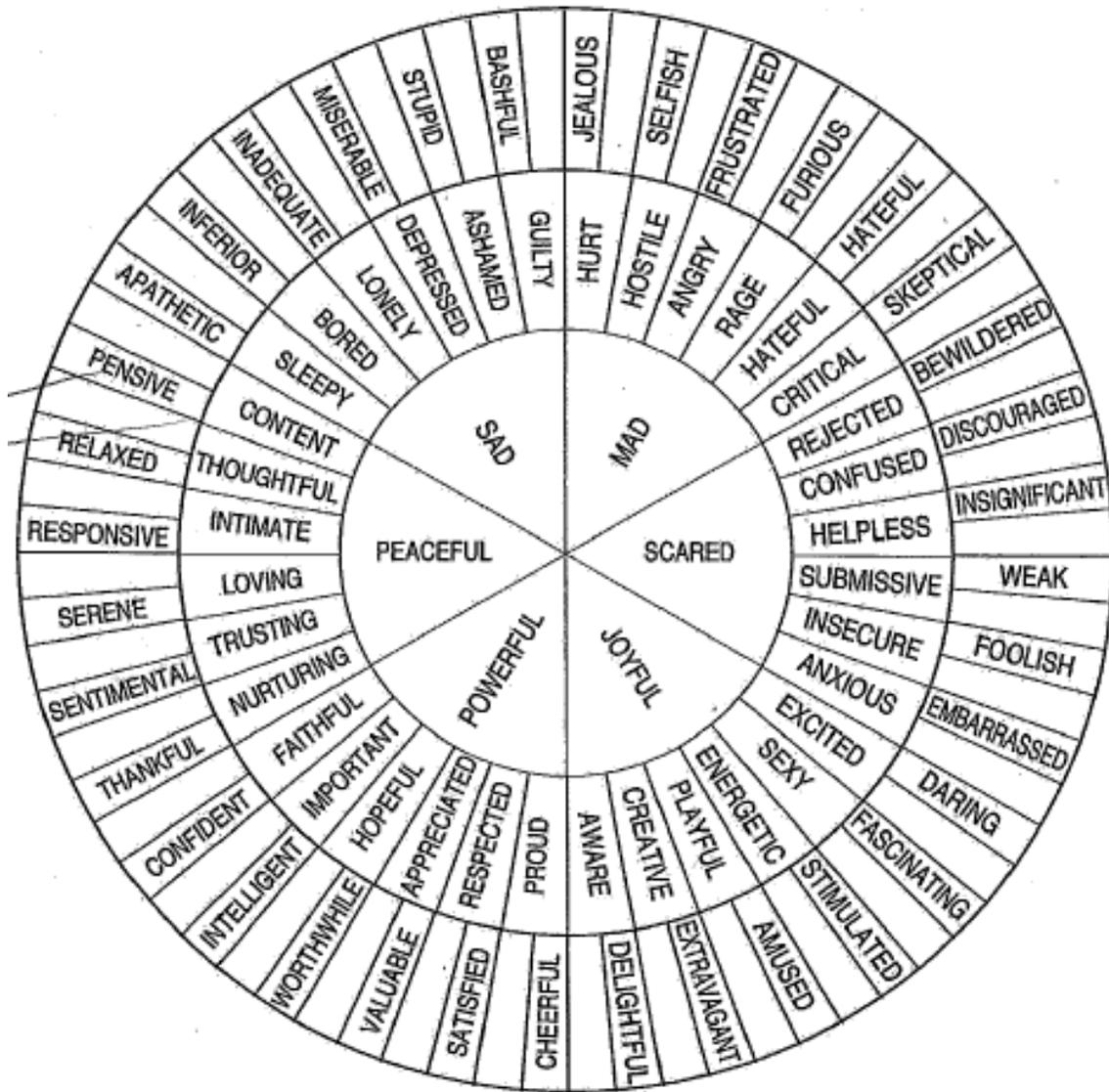
I gather . . . .

You appear. . . .



## THE FEELING WHEEL

Adapted from Dr. Gloria Willcox





# How Do You Feel Today?

						
Aggressive	Agonized	Anxious	Apologetic	Arrogant	Bashful	Blissful
						
Bored	Cautious	Cold	Concentrating	Confident	Curious	Demure
						
Determined	Disappointed	Disapproving	Disbelieving	Disgusted	Distasteful	Eavesdropping
						
Ecstatic	Enraged	Envious	Exasperated	Exhausted	Frightened	Frustrated
						
Grieving	Guilty	Happy	Horrorified	Hot	Hungover	Hurt
						
Hysterical	Idiotic	Indifferent	Innocent	Interested	Jealous	Loaded
						
Lonely	Lovestruck	Meditative	Mischievous	Miserable	Negative	Obstinate
						
Optimistic	Pained	Paranoid	Perplexed	Prudish	Puzzled	Regretful
						
Relieved	Sad	Satisfied	Sheepish	Shocked	Smug	Surly
						
Surprised	Suspicious	Sympathetic	Thoughtful	Turned-on	Undecided	Withdrawn



### **Physically oriented**

alert  
alive  
aroused  
beat  
breathless  
burned out  
charged  
cold  
comfortable  
edgy  
energetic  
enervated  
enlivened  
excited  
exhausted  
exhilarated  
famished  
fatigued  
full  
gorged  
hot  
hungry  
hurt  
ill  
invigorated  
jittery  
keyed up  
lethargic  
listless  
loose  
nervous  
on edge  
refreshed  
relaxed  
restless  
run-down  
rushed  
shaky  
sick  
sleepy  
spent  
steady  
stiff  
strong

tense  
tired  
titillated  
uncomfortable  
under the weather  
unsteady  
warm  
weak  
weary  
well  
wide-awake  
worn

### **slang**

blah  
grossed out  
hacked-off  
hacked up  
high  
hot  
mellow  
mopey  
off  
out of it  
pooped  
psyched  
psyched up  
shot  
teed off  
ticked off  
tight  
together  
turned off  
turned on  
unglued  
uptight  
wasted  
whipped  
wiped out  
wired  
with it  
whipped  
zapped  
zonked

### **Spiritually oriented**

alive  
apathetic  
awakened  
bad  
bored  
bound  
committed  
complacent  
confident  
courageous  
dead  
defeated  
despairing  
detached  
discouraged  
disheartened  
dissatisfied  
downhearted  
empty  
enlightened  
enlivened  
fearful  
free  
fulfilled  
full  
good  
guilty  
helpless  
hopeful  
hopeless  
indifferent  
insecure  
inspired  
joyful  
joyous  
jubilant  
lonely  
lost  
loving  
moved  
optimistic  
overwhelmed  
peaceful  
penitent

pessimistic  
powerful  
powerless  
proud  
redeemed  
renewed  
repentant  
satisfied  
secure  
strong  
sure  
thankful  
touched  
trustful  
unsure  
whole

### **Cognitively oriented**

absorbed  
alert  
amazed  
ambivalent  
appreciative  
complacent  
composed  
concerned  
confused  
curious  
engrossed  
fascinated  
hesitant  
inquisitive  
interested  
intrigued  
involved  
optimistic  
out of touch  
perplexed  
puzzled  
reluctant  
skeptical  
stimulated  
suspicious  
unconcerned  
uninterested



unnerved

**Emotionally  
oriented**

afraid  
aggravated  
agitated  
alarmed  
amused  
angry  
annoyed  
anxious  
apprehensive  
aroused  
astonished  
bad  
bitter  
blue  
broken-hearted  
calm  
comfortable  
concerned  
confused  
cross

dejected  
delighted  
depressed  
disappointed  
disco=aged  
disgruntled  
disgusted  
dismayed  
displeased  
distraught  
distressed  
disturbed  
down  
downcast  
downhearted  
ecstatic  
elated  
electrified  
embarrassed  
enthralled  
exhilarated  
frightened  
frustrated  
furious

glad  
grateful  
grieved  
happy  
horrified  
hurt  
infuriated  
irked  
irritated  
jealous  
jittery  
joyful  
joyous  
jubilant  
lonely  
mad  
melancholic  
merry  
miffed,  
miserable  
mortified  
nettled  
overjoyed  
pleased

rancorous  
relieved  
resentful  
sad  
scared  
shocked  
sorrowful  
spellbound  
splendid  
surprised  
taken aback  
tense  
terrified  
touched  
tranquil  
troubled  
undone  
uneasy  
unhappy  
unhinged  
upset  
vexed



**EXERCISE #3: Identify the underlying feelings in these statements. Then write a possible response you might make.**

1. Everyone has so much advice for me. My husband says this, my dad says that, and my mother says something else. They talk about my problem and act like I'm not even in the room. It's as though what I think doesn't matter at all.

Feelings identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible response: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Sometimes I'm sure there's a God that loves us and then I see such awful things happening all the time, and it seems as though God doesn't seem to care about all the suffering. Maybe God has given up on us humans or maybe He doesn't even exist.

Feelings identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible response: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I don't know whether to have a baby or not. George isn't sure either. I must love my work... it's stimulating and challenging and I'm well paid. Then again, sometimes I long to have a child and be a full-time mother.

Feelings identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible response: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I can't eat, I can't sleep, I can't think straight, and I cry all the time. I'm a wreck!

Feelings identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible response: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Things are beginning to look up. I talked to my boss last week and he as much as said I'd be getting a raise.

Feelings identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible response: \_\_\_\_\_



## ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

*“A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinion.” Proverbs 18:2*

Good questions are:

1. Open-ended
2. Keep the conversation focused on the most important issues
3. Timed well
4. Phrased well
5. Focused on care receiver

Avoid the following types of questions:

1. Close-ended questions
2. “Why” questions
3. Rapid-fire questions
4. Questions containing answers

Don't say: *“Is it difficult knowing your dad's in the hospital?”* (what's wrong with this Q?)  
 Do say: *“How are you doing with the news of your dad's hospitalization?”*

Don't say: *“Why have you not been going to work this week?”* (what's wrong with this Q?)  
 Do say: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't say: *“Do you think it would be good to go back to work tomorrow?”*  
 Do say: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVE LISTENING MAY NOT BE HELPFUL FOR:

1. The inveterate chatterbox whose conversation is one way.
2. The unimaginative conversationalist who can't think of what to say.
3. The extremely ill; too weak to speak.
4. Someone who does not want you to be there but is too polite to ask you to leave.



## LISTEN

From Stephen's Ministry training @ First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you start giving advice  
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,  
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem,  
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked, was that you listen.  
not talk or do - just hear me.  
Advice is cheap: 20 cents will get you both Dear Abby  
And Billy Graham in the same newspaper.  
And I can do for myself; I'm not helpless.  
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me *that I can and need to do for myself*;  
you contribute to my fear and weakness.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,  
no matter how irrational,  
then I can quit trying to convince you  
and get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling.  
And when that's clear,  
the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people  
because God is mute, and he doesn't give advice  
or try to *fix things*.  
"They" just listen and let you work it out for yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me.  
And, if you want to talk,  
wait a minute for your turn;  
and I'll listen to you.