Self-Directed Listening Spectrum Exercise

Without referring to the Listening Spectrum PDF or looking beyond the first page of this document, consider this scenario: You are a parent relaxing at home on Sunday with your 15 year old daughter in the living room, reading but not interacting with each other. Suddenly she says something surprising to you, and with considerable energy:

*“I can’t believe I have to go to school tomorrow! I hate school this year!!!”*

Write down what you think *your parents* likely would have said to a 15 year old daughter in this scenario?

Write down what you imagine your *spouse* might say?

Write down *your* ‘top of mind’ responses.

Now review the Listening Spectrum PDF and read the rest of this document. If you were trying harder to actively listen, and to empathize, what might you say or do?

Share your own responses with coach, rate your responses and discuss.

LISTENING SPECTRUM characteristic examples 1 – 5:

1*.* Don’t Feel that Way messages: *“Oh, honey, don’t say that – you love school! Just last week you were telling me how much fun you are having with your new friends.”*

*OR*

*“Welcome to reality. We all have to do things we don’t want to. It’s called growing up. You think I’m looking forward to work tomorrow?”*

2. Fix the Problem: *“Is this about your math homework again? Let me look at it with you. I’m sure you can do it if you just spend a little focused time on it.”*

*“Oh you poor thing. Are those girls being mean to you again? Let mummy give you a hug.”*

3. Neutral, Receptive, Attentive Silence: “*Do you want to talk?... What’s up?...”* Just putting down your book and waiting for more.

4.Acknowledge a Single Feeling: *“Wow, you sound really frustrated!….”*

5. See PDF. Level 5 requires some ramping up to tune in and understand what’s going on. After some exploration you might understand for example: *“Jenny and Barb didn’t invite you to join the club and they ignore you in class… You are afraid you aren’t going to find new friends… that maybe no one you think is cool will ever want to hang out with you…”*

Choose a scenario with a real person in your life. Roleplay or brainstorm with your coach what level 3 and deeper responses might be. The deepest levels might not occur immediately, but imagine what you might uncover and how you might provide needed company in their bewildering, sad, frustrating or scary experience. Imagine how once you have done that ‘empathic joining’ the other might be able to shift into Creator orientation and better see what they really want and options for moving in that direction.

What is the Essence of Deep Empathic Listening?

…It is deeper and deeper joining with another in their experience. It is being good company as they think and feel through what is happening for them and what they really want. The word ‘under-stand’ itself implies standing under their sky, inside their story. You are perceiving, feeling, holding that person’s experience *with* them. 99% of homo sapiens find this comforting, clarifying and empowering.

How to Generate Level 4 and Beyond:

* Don’t bring the focus back to you by saying “If it were me I would…” “When I did that…”
* Ask yourself how might it feel to be him/her? To be telling yourself that Story?
* What emotional continent are they on? The primary colors of negative emotion are Mad, Sad and Scared.
* Offer your thoughts as a ‘guess’, that is, tentatively.

How to Generate Level 5:

* Ask yourself, “What might be *at stake* for this person in this situation?” Say that out loud.
* Try leaving the “I” out altogether and just asking very simply “You are feeling (excited but unsure what to do next)?” Or simply stating and pausing, giving the other person the chance to correct you if you are wrong – “You are feeling (pretty angry about what he said) (glad to finally be out of there) (sad that the program is over)…?
* After you get a general location, and they have perhaps ‘course corrected’ your empathic guesses, focus in on nuance and complexity (so you’ve been bouncing between hope and fear).
* At this level you may be articulating more to and for the person than they have consciously realized, thought through, or said out loud before. Give them space to consider – *Is this what I am experiencing? What else is part of this? What is at Risk for me? What are the implications?*