

## LISTENING-IN

The journey of personal growth depends on listening. Listening is the critical ingredient in the positive change process; without it we simply remain stuck in the very things we are desperate to leave behind. If you keep going round the same loop and despite your best efforts you continue to be bullied by old familiar habits, patterns, and moods, then there is 'something' missing. There is 'something' you haven't seen, heard, or understood and until you find out what that is you will remain frustrated and trapped. It is generally at this point we look to blame other things or people for our predicament (see *The Blame Game and Personal Responsibility*), but the truth is usually found in the mirror - you! Although you may find some temporary comfort and relief in the game of blame, all you really achieve is inertia, as you are unable to move away from all that binds you.

Blame is a mirage that promises you much, but in the end, provides you with an illusion, because none of your answers and solutions will ever be found in that place. Look closely at your life and be really honest with yourself and you'll see blame is an excuse that distracts you from the REAL problem, which lives within you. You will find under closer scrutiny (see *Who Are You When No One is Looking*) that the real problem lies somewhere in your shame, fear, doubt, anger, guilt, pain and resentment just to name a few. In order to respond to what's really going on and discover what's missing, the journey needs to begin with listening. Sadly, this is a journey few have taken. Ask yourself this question: are you really listening or simply waiting to speak? If you're honest, far too often you're simply waiting to speak - you're waiting for your turn because it's when you next speak 'they' are bound to understand that you're indeed right. If you look even closer, you'll begin to see that most of your conversations are with your own assumptions and projections; you're not even able to hear the other person because you're too busy with your own internal dialogue! It's this absence of listening that most keeps you stuck. Not only do you not hear what is being offered from the outside world, but even worse you are unable to hear the whisperings of your own heart. This 'waiting to speak' is not listening to the heart; it is a destructive habit that is largely a defence mechanism. It is either driven by your desperation to be right or your fear of being found out. Essentially it is about fear and shame.

'Listening-in' is the practice of sitting with oneself and being present in that moment. It is the beautiful practice of asking your heart to reveal its secrets to you. Listening-in recognises that what we know, by itself, will never free us: it's what we do that counts! Doing what needs to be done comes from the power of realisation. Knowing is to have the information within your grasp and therefore the possibility of change; whereas realisation is to understand the deep significance of that information and to apply its meaning to your own life. So, to know means very little but to realise means everything. Realisation depends on both listening to the world and 'listening-in' to the sounds of the heart and mind. This takes practice. Find 5 - 10 minutes every day, or at least every other day, to sit with the question 'dearest heart and mind, what more is there for me to see, understand and learn?' Let this question gently resonate inside you. Don't force it; be patient and keep reciting it every minute or so. Don't be concerned about getting answers: they will come in their own time. Let your concern be to give yourself this gift of listening-in. You could also say: 'dearest heart and mind, probably for the first time I'm really listening, I'm not afraid or unwilling to hear your secrets': 'so please tell me what I need to know'. Practise this simple drill and you'll find 'listening-in' will also enhance your 'listening-out', which in turn will deepen your insights and reveal even more secrets; it's a beautiful eternal loop. Try it and see for yourself.