

LISTENING-IN 2

Listening is a quiet, gentle, attentive skill. The more you practice it the more it becomes an art which enables you to see life with all its depth and subtleties. Listening makes the complex simple, it makes the unknown visible, and it explains the 'un-said', leaving no mystery un-resolved. Listening offers you the 'gift of truth' but it requires your patience and attention; without these it will not offer up its countless revelations and secrets.

'Listening-out' is the willingness to hear what the world is saying to you. Much more can be learned by listening and then cross-referencing what you hear with the sounds of your own heart and mind. It is not possible for one person to experience everything in one lifetime, but it is possible to 'understand' everything in your lifetime if there is sufficient humility. Humility is not a weak and submissive virtue; it offers you real power, incredible depth, and the keys to wisdom. A wisdom that takes a 360 degree look at oneself and reality. It's the willingness (humility) to listen to what life and others are really saying that gives you access to all you need to know. Humility does not need to be right, in fact it is so obsessed with truth it doesn't concern itself with needing to be right, or with the fear of looking silly. Humility knows that denial, justification and generating smoke screens to conceal the self are a prison that never offers parole! So, free yourself by 'listening-out'. There is so much to learn, and your journey can't really begin until you do. It must be said that listening-out, without also listening-in, will eventually lead you down blind alleys and crooked paths. You must have both practices sitting side by side. One who only listens-out will never develop the discrimination to know what should be embraced and what should be discarded. Without discrimination you will be deceived, manipulated, and lose your own identity in order to fit into a world that demands constant change from you. So, as necessary and valuable as listening-out is, it must be balanced with listening in, to ensure you don't lose your way.

Listening-in requires finding time regularly to sit in solitude, even 5 or 10 minutes will do, but it must be regular otherwise you simply won't develop the rapport with yourself. Listening to what is going on in your inner world, then decoding and understanding its many messages, takes time. So, sit often, but without expectation. This is critical. Listening has no expectation, it's too busy absorbing what it can hear, even if it's only silence - for it knows even silence has a language all of its own. The more you practice sitting and listening to your mind, heart and body the more you will make 'conscious contact' with yourself. When there is conscious contact, your body will tell you what its needs are. In fact, it's doing this all the time but if you check carefully, you'll find that you're rarely paying attention. And yet the body continues to patiently work in your best interest (see Persuading the Body series). If you could hear your body's cries, you would support it and work with it rather than against it. Your heart (feelings) offers an unlimited set of insights, a knowing beyond the limitations of logic and yet you ignore its cries too. Your heart is your best internal guidance system, it's like a compass pointing you in the right direction, but without learning to listen you'll rarely hear what it advises. The mind (thoughts) is a powerhouse of potential and opportunity; it hungrily feeds off knowledge in an attempt to fuel its hopes and endeavours. The mind is also a magician, ready to disclose its secrets but without the practice of 'listening-in' we become confused because we don't know which of our thoughts to trust.

As with listening-out, if we only listen-in, we can be deceived. To only listen-in can mean we become trapped in believing those things we've inherited, which have lived in our minds for so long, that we've come to believe them. What you believe, you make true, so don't fall into the lethal trap of simply believing your thoughts. Listening-in, as well as out, enables you to properly vet the heart and mind and discern what's real and true from what is fake and habitual. Both kinds of listening will free you from this prison of limitation, ignorance, and victimhood. All that is needed is practice - little and often, and your life will open up in ways you couldn't even have imagined.