



PATHFINDING OUTFITTERS

Levels of listening

Opponents of listening

Established beliefs, practices, and structures want to be stable, and listening can be disruptive. Defensive filtering blocks listening and traps change maker's minds in judgment, their hearts in cynicism, and their wills in fear. These opposing voices show up to distract attention in conversation with others and in self-talk.

Falling into these traps protects against uncertainty and keeps routines and structures stable. The cost is lost knowledge from ignoring new information, failing to understand the situation as others feel it, and missing the learning that can only come from action.

Avoiding these traps begins with awareness that attention has been hijacked and redirecting to attending with curiosity, compassion, and courage.



The **Voice of Judgment** makes the mind busy sorting: realistic from unrealistic, possible from impossible, right from wrong, and on and on . Turned inward to listen only to itself, the mind rejects whatever fails to confirm current mindset and assumptions, The practice of **curiosity opens the mind** to new thoughts and challenges to what is taken for granted.



The **Voice of Cynicism** drains feeling, meaning and energy by stacking up reasons that desired change can't happen. Common tricks include over-focusing on scarcity, belittling desire for better futures as naive, and denying the possibility of altruism. The practice of **compassion opens the heart**, bringing feeling and embodied knowing alive.



The **Voice of Fear** freezes action and encourages turning away by amplifying a generalized sense of vulnerability and risk. The practice of **courage opens the will**, allowing learning by taking steps into a desirable future and responding to what happens as a result.

Reflecting on our Level of Listening

Pause and reflect for a minute after a meeting or conversation to identify moments of Level 3 or 4 listening and any ways the voices of judgment, cynicism or fear showed up.

Level of Listening	Experience	Result
Listening 1 <i>downloading</i>	Just what I expected.	No change or small changes in understanding. Mostly a repeat of the same ideas.
<i>Open Mind expresses curiosity and quiets the Voice of Judgment</i>		
Listening 2 <i>debating</i>	I became aware of some new facts and ideas that challenged my assumptions and shifted the way I make sense of the situation.	Taking account of new realities; better informed. More aware of assumptions, new ideas and alternative ways to understand current reality.
<i>Open Heart activates compassion and overcomes the Voice of Cynicism</i>		
LISTENING 3 <i>dialogue</i>	I have seen the situation, and my place in it, through the eyes of someone whose experience is different from mine. I have a new sense of how another person experiences the situation and how they feel it. My own feelings resonate with those of someone different from me.	Awareness of real differences in experience and evaluation of the situation; new perspective; better understanding of aspects of the situation that have been hidden or avoided.
<i>Open Will draws on courage and calms the Voice of Fear</i>		
LISTENING 4 <i>collective creativity</i>	I am not the same person now than I was when I entered this conversation. Together we generated understanding and possibilities that did not exist when the conversation started.	A growing sense of the highest possibility in the situation and the contribution I can make.
<p>The table is based on a video on levels of listening presented by Otto Scharmer in the edX course, <i>U.Lab: Transforming Business, Society & Self</i>, 21 January 2015.</p>		