



# PATHFINDING OUTFITTERS

## Sensing Practices

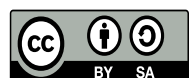


- Levels of listening
- Learning journey
- Dialogue interview
- Stakeholder interview
- Sharing place & time

The content of this guide is adapted from materials created by The Presencing Institute. Adaptations apply the practices to organizations seeking to improve their capacity to offer person-centered support. Links to the original instructions for these practices are included.

To better understand Theory U start at [www.u-school.org/](http://www.u-school.org/). A short introduction in the context of social invention with people with developmental disabilities at <https://bit.ly/37x3YZ4>

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## Turning to One Another

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

    Talk to people you know.

    Talk to people you don’t know.

    Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

—Margaret Wheatley

Each of the practices here guide conversations that can matter to sensing what more is possible. How much these practices matter depends completely on the quality of listening. Use Levels of Li

[margaretwheatley.com](http://margaretwheatley.com)

# Levels of listening

Practice using these Levels of Listening to check your listening after meetings & conversations or during breaks.

Notice opportunities to listen more deeply.

Notice when the Voices of Judgment, Cynicism, & Fear show up.

Level of Listening	Experience	Result
<b>Listening LEVEL 1 downloading</b>	<i>Just what I expected.</i>	No new understanding. No increase in desire to act. Mostly a repeat of the same ideas.
Open Mind expresses curiosity & quiets the Voice of Judgment		
<b>Listening LEVEL 2 debating</b>	<i>I became aware of some new facts &amp; ideas that challenged my assumptions &amp; shifted the way I make sense of the situation.</i>	Taking account of new realities; better informed. More aware of assumptions. New ideas & alternative ways to understand current reality.
Open Heart activates compassion & tames the Voice of Cynicism		
<b>LISTENING LEVEL 3 dialogue</b>	<i>I have seen the situation, &amp; 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 &amp; how they feel it. My own feelings resonate with those of someone different from me.</i>	Awareness of real differences in experience & evaluation of the situation; new perspective; better understanding of aspects of the situation that have been hidden or avoided.
Open Will draws on courage & transforms the Voice of Fear		
<b>LISTENING LEVEL 4 collective creativity</b>	<i>I am not the same person now than I was when I entered this conversation. Together we generated understanding &amp; possibilities that did not exist when the conversation started.</i>	A stronger sense of the highest possibility in the situation & an increase in the will to bring that possibility into reality.
The table is based on a video on levels of listening presented by Otto Scharmer in the edX course, <i>U.Lab</i> <a href="http://www.presencing.org/news/news/theory-u-introduction">www.presencing.org/news/news/theory-u-introduction</a> .		

# Learning journey

**A Learning Journey is an opportunity to widen the horizon of possibility** by visiting & learning from places of potential. It works best when a small group makes the journey together.

**Consider learning journeys to explore how other organizations...**

...support people living in their own homes, holding community jobs, participating alongside other citizens in community life, engaging in lifelong learning, & self-directing their supports..

...assisting people with complex or challenging needs to hold contributing community roles.

...engage in transformational change.

...develop committed direct support workers.

Move outside the world of human services & visit community & business initiatives concerned with building community.

*Discover new possibilities in a wider social field*

## Be mindful

- Your purpose is to expand your sense of what is possible & how the new comes to be. Suspend the Voice of Judgment & the Voice of Cynicism & access your sense of curiosity, appreciation & wonder.
- A Learning Journey expands your social field by connecting your work to others with a similar sense of purpose.
- Practice three forms of listening...
  - ... listen to others; allow what others offer to touch & influence you
  - ... listen to yourself; attend to what emerges within you as you experience the work of others
  - ... listen to the emerging whole: tune in to what the wider social field is showing you about your highest purpose & how to move deeper into it.
- Take what you hear & see as a starting point & improvise questions that deepen your understanding.
- Listen for & welcome glimpses into the best future possibility for those you meet & for the whole situation you share with them.

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Based on *Sensing Journeys*.

[www.presencing.org/resource/tools/sensing-journeys-desc](http://www.presencing.org/resource/tools/sensing-journeys-desc)

## Steps

- Identify an organization that will provide a new sense of what is possible & different approaches to move toward those possibilities & arrange for a visit.. Based on discussion with the host, draft some questions for initial orientation.
- Arrange a schedule with the host that will let the visitors meet a variety of people & experience & learn from as much of the organization's work as possible in the time available.
- Travel to the host's location. Make time to renew intentions for the visit.
- Team members observe & trust their intuition to observe & inquire, asking simple, authentic questions that come up the moment. Practice deep listening to hold the space for conversations with the hosts.
- Make time for individual & group reflection on the visit. If the visit lasts more than one day, make time at the end of each day. Share...
  - What struck me most?
  - What touched me?
  - What surprised me?
  - Is there anything I want to follow up on?
- Bring what you have learned back home & share to identify possibilities..

## Possible questions

- What has been most important in clarifying & growing commitment to individualized supports?
- What have been the most important sources of energy & creativity in moving toward individualized supports?
- What have been the most important milestones on your journey so far?
- What issues or challenges are you facing that hold up or slow movement? Why do you think these challenges exist?
- If you could change just two things about our system that would better support transformation, what would you change & why?

# Dialogue interview

A Dialogue Interview is a **reflective conversation** open to insights into the experience & understanding of the person giving the interview. Open as well to thinking together in a way that allows seeds of new possibility to emerge. The listener is authentically interested in the other's perspective & thinking & willing to follow the thinking that develops in the moment. The listener's intention is to build trust with those affected by change & connect them to the work.

*See through another's eyes*

## Be mindful

- Your purpose is to bring out the best in the person who is giving you the interview. Suspend your Voice of Judgment & open your heart to the person so you can begin to see their situation through their eyes.
- Figure out a few open ended questions to initiate & guide the conversation. Then go with the flow, access your ignorance by attending to & trusting questions that occur to you & finding good moments to ask them.
- Follow the conversation as it develops. Let go of any anxiety about being in control so the person giving the interview has space to discover new connections &, perhaps, for moments of shared thinking.
- Make the most of presence -quiet, appreciative openness to the person in front of you- & silence. Don't interrupt moments of silence, but stay present. Notice & let go of distractions that take you out of the conversation.
- Listen for & welcome glimpses into the best future possibility for the person who is giving you the interview & for the whole situation you share with them.
- You are not there to sell or persuade but to listen & learn. Be clear about the importance of this person's potential contribution to understanding the work of strengthening person-centered practice.

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Based on *Dialogue Interview*.

[www.presencing.org/resource/tools/dialogue-interview-desc](http://www.presencing.org/resource/tools/dialogue-interview-desc)

## Steps

- Arrange a quiet place & allow about 30-45 minutes for the interview. Allow yourself 15 minutes or so before the interview to quiet yourself & focus your intention for the interview.
- Choose or frame a few open ended questions & choose a question to start the conversation. Let the conversation develop; don't get stuck in prepared questions.
- Enjoy the conversation, even when some of it may be challenging or difficult to hear.
- Take 10-15 minutes after the interview to reflect & journal to capture ideas & insights you want to remember.
  - What struck me most?
  - What touched me?
  - What surprised me?
  - Is there anything I want to follow up on?
  - Where was my level of listening?

## Possible Questions

- What moved you to set out (to take this job, join this particular organization, follow this path)? What were you seeking to accomplish?
- Thinking about the situation of people who require supports...
  - ... what gives you hope
  - ... what gives you concern
- When big challenges faced you in the past, what helped you to deal with them?
- What has been some of your most important learning about leadership for meaningful change?
- What future possibilities do you think it is most important to invest in?
- What are the biggest challenges you (&/ or your organization) face now? What do you think is the source of these challenges?
- What breaks your heart?
- What keeps you awake?
- What questions hold the most interest for you now?

# Stakeholder interview

A Stakeholder Interview is an opportunity to discover how your work looks from the point of view of people whose lives are affected by what you do & how you do it. It's a way to find out what they value about your work & what they would have you change.

## Consider inviting interviews with...

- People you support.
- Family members.
- Allies.
- Legal guardians.
- Employers & landlords for people you support.
- Direct support workers & front line supervisors who are influenced by your work (don't forget administrative staff).
- Middle & senior managers.
- Board members.
- Staff from other organizations that serve the people the organization supports.
- Managers in the long-term support system.

*See your work from the outside*

## Be mindful

- Your purpose is to learn as much as you can about how the person giving the interview experiences your work. Let go of the Voice of Judgment & open your heart so you can see your work through their eyes.
- Choose a few open ended questions to begin & guide the conversation. Then go with the flow. Access your ignorance by attending to & trusting questions that occur to you & finding good moments to ask them.
- You are looking for this person's truth about something that also matters to you: your performance. Notice what you want to disagree with or what makes you uncomfortable. Then let go of the explanations, justifications, & arguments that come to mind. Whatever takes you away, keep coming back to the intention to listen with curiosity, compassion (for yourself as well as the other), & courage.
- Make the most of presence & silence—quiet, appreciative openness to the person in front of you. Don't interrupt moments of silence, but stay present.
- Listen for & welcome glimpses into the best future possibility for the person who is giving you the interview & for the whole situation you share with them.

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Based on *Stakeholder Interview*.

[www.presencing.org/resource/tools/stakeholder-interview-desc](http://www.presencing.org/resource/tools/stakeholder-interview-desc)



## Steps

- Make a list of people whose perceptions of your work can help you improve. Don't forget people who might be easy to overlook. Notice reluctance to offer someone an interview & consider inviting them anyway.
- Decide whether there will be one or two listeners, who the pairs will be & who will take the lead.
- Make the invitation. Think of a way that suits the person to briefly orient them to the conversation. Share your reasons for asking for an interview.
- Consider the person's convenience & arrange a comfortable, quiet place,. Set aside 30-60 minutes for the interview. Find out about any accommodations that will make it easier for the interview giver to participate.
- Fame a few open ended questions that fit what you know about the interview give. Choose a question to start the conversation. Let the other person's account of your work develop; don't get stuck in prepared questions.
- Give yourself 15 minutes or so of quiet before the interview to renew your intentions.
- Orient the person to the interview by briefly reviewing your invitation to the interview. Get permission to take notes & clarify any concerns about confidentiality, attribution of what the person says & requested follow-up.
- Open your self to the person's perceptions, even when some of what they may be difficult or challenging to hear.
- Schedule time immediately after the interview to reflect.

- What struck me most?
- What touched me?
- What surprised me?
- Is there anything I want to follow up on?
- Where was my level of listening?
- Send the person a thank-you note the next day.

## Possible Questions

- When our organization is at its best, what do we do for you? What happens for you when we provides just exactly what you need, no less, no more?
- How could wen fail you or let you down? What does or could happen when our support breaks down?
- When you think about the future what would you like to be different for you? How could we help with that?
- What worries you or makes you afraid? What do we do that helps when things are hard? What more could we do?
- What criteria do you use to use to assess the value of what we provides for you?
- If we could make two changes to what we do, what changes would make the most positive difference for you?

# Sharing place & time

*Expand your experience*

**Sharing place & time** allows design team members to absorb knowledge by immersing themselves in a different environment, observing & constructing a rich account of a setting important to a person who offers the gift of sharing their space.

## **Consider sharing place & time with...**

- People who rely on long-term support who have benefited from individualized supports & live in their own homes, hold real jobs, are engaged in learning or are active in community groups.
- People in group settings: group homes, day programs, community experience programs.
- People in more restrictive settings: nursing homes, institutions.
- Families who provide substantial assistance to people who qualify for long-term support.
- Direct support workers in group or individualized services.

Pay particular attention to sharing time & space with people whose voices are seldom heard.

## **Be mindful**

- Your purpose is to learn what you can from sharing a brief time with others in a place that shapes their everyday life experience. You are constructing a story of the interaction of person & place, the ways this setting supports or inhibits the person's discovery of what more is possible.
- Make the most of presence –quiet, respectful openness to the person in place. Let impressions come to you & take form inside you. Don't feel you need to make things happen, but let the place happen to you by observing as quietly as you can. Experience the shape & flow of place & time more than interview to hear people's description of their experience.
- You can't know what another person is experiencing but you can do your best to put yourself in their place. As best you can, put yourself in the position of a person receiving service or a direct support worker & access your thinking, feeling & imagining.
- Be open to glimpses into the best future possibility for the person & place & to the qualities of place that make this possibility visible.
- Be open to notice whatever about the place, activities & interactions might hold back discovery of what more is possible. Don't let the Voice of Judgment distract you from experiencing what is there as fully as you can. Notice any explanations you supply to justify or excuse what you are seeing: judgments about the difficulty of supporting the person, the inadequacy of funding, etc.

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Based on *Shadowing*. [www.presencing.org/resource/tools/shadowing-desc](http://www.presencing.org/resource/tools/shadowing-desc)

## Steps

- Identify places you can learn from & decide on the role that will focus your observation: a person whose communication we don't yet understand in a group home; a mother who lives with & provides assistance to a person whose behavior can be challenging; a direct support worker who shares a person's home.
- Make the invitation. Think of a way that suits the person & setting to briefly orient them to your interest in learning by sharing time with them. Be clear that your aim is to understand an ordinary time in the focus person's life, not to evaluate or make recommendations.
- Consider the person's schedule & negotiate the times when you could learn the most. It generally works well to share...
  - ...up to a whole day in a day program, community experience, or institutional setting
  - ...time on & off the job when a person has a community job
  - ...a morning & evening or a weekend day where a person lives
  - ...a typical activity when a person is part of a community group, maybe more than once.
- Give yourself 15 minutes or so of quiet before joining the person to renew your intentions. Imagine the best possible outcome for yourself & those whose time & space you will share.
- Open your heart & mind. Suspend your Voice of Judgment. Try to see the setting from insider's different perspectives.
- Be respectful & quietly friendly. As appropriate to the place & activity either find an unobtrusive place to observe or join in as quietly as possible.
- If there are organized activities don't interrupt them. Converse or ask questions during breaks or other open moments.
- If the place & activity allows, make notes. Clearly distinguish description of what you see & hear from what you think & feel.
- Schedule time immediately after your observations to reflect. Think about what surprised you; what inspired you; what make you uncomfortable; what questions you have.
- Send those who make the sharing possible a thank-you note the next day.