

Communicating With Love in All Our Relationships

The following is from the newsletter *The Holy Encounter*. It is excerpted from the book *Love is the Answer* by Gerald Jampolsky and Diane Cirincione. This book is considered to be a sequel to Jampolsky's internationally best-selling book, *Love Is Letting Go Of Fear*.

We begin to truly establish loving relationships when we commit ourselves to listening with love, tenderness, receptivity, and understanding in all of our communications. We feel our interconnectedness in all our relationships when we listen with a gentle and patient energy that says, "I have all the time in the world to listen to you. You are important to me, and what you have to say is important to me."

Listening with love does not necessarily mean that we have to agree, but it does mean listening without attacking or being defensive. It means listening with no assumptions, no expectations, and no demands. It means listening with an open heart and with respect for the other person as an equal.

Listening doesn't just happen. Rather, it involves a choice, a decision. When we listen to the voice of the ego, we are tempted to not listen to anything else. When we listen to the inner voice of love, we will make the decision to listen with love.

Talking too much, not listening, and constantly interrupting other people before they have finished what they want to say are some of the more common traits of listening to the ego. The underlying message we send to the other person is: "I want you to listen to me because what I have to say is most important." Or, "I am too busy and absorbed in myself to listen to your irrelevant words!"

One of the reasons that so many conflicts occur between parents and children is that we have forgotten how to listen to each other with love and patience. Children learn this easily when it is taught and demonstrated by their parents.

There are some families where children are punished or yelled at simply because they took the risk of sharing how they felt. Often children are not listened to because their parents simply may not be around or, if they are, Dad is too busy reading the paper or Mom is too busy talking on the phone.

Listening doesn't necessarily mean agreement. Listening with love doesn't mean we don't say no and set limits for our children or even the adults in our relationships. It does mean, however, giving our children, friends, coworkers, partners, spouses---virtually everyone we meet---the time and space to be heard, not for just the words but for the emotions that need to be expressed.

If there is a single skill necessary for establishing loving relationships, it is the art of listening. So many people, ourselves included, have such busy daily schedules that we often find it easy to tell ourselves that we can't take time to listen.

One way that helps us learn to listen to others is to set aside some time each day to quiet our minds, listen to our own thoughts, and then open ourselves to others. You may find that you can do this best very early in the morning, taking a few moments to enjoy the specific music of a new day. Or you may find that you can do this best very late in the evening, when the house is quiet.

A young man by the name of Tinman Walker has been an important teacher for all of us who have known him at the Center for Attitudinal Healing. When he first came to the center, he was about fourteen years old. Two years before that, he had been hit by a truck while riding his bicycle. Following the accident, he was in a coma for more than eighty days.

When we met Tinman, he had worked very hard in physical therapy to recover from his injuries, but he still had spastic paralysis and a speech impediment. He talked very slowly, and it was often very difficult to understand him.

We remember Tinman's first meeting at the center, where he joined about fourteen other kids his age who faced life-threatening illnesses. Tinman announced that he wanted to tell a joke. Because of his difficulties with speech, a joke that usually took a minute or two to tell took Tinman ten or fifteen.

What followed was a most remarkable thing. As Tinman started telling his joke, everyone--- and we mean everyone---listened with their full attention. They focused on every word. There was no impatience. There was no lack of attention. No one's mind wandered and no one tried to interrupt him to tell their own story or to try to finish his for him. While we watched and listened, tears came to our eyes as we recognized the caring and love and patience that everyone was expressing in that room.

When Tinman finally delivered his punch line, the room filled with laughter. Tinman's face lit up with joy. He went on to say that he had always had a good sense of humor. But since the accident, no one seemed able to take the time to listen to his jokes because it took him such a terribly long time to get them all out. This was the first time anyone seemed to have the patience to let him finish a joke. He added, with tears in his eyes, that he had never before experienced so much unconditional love...