

# **JUST Listening: Effective Communication for Personal and Social Transformation**

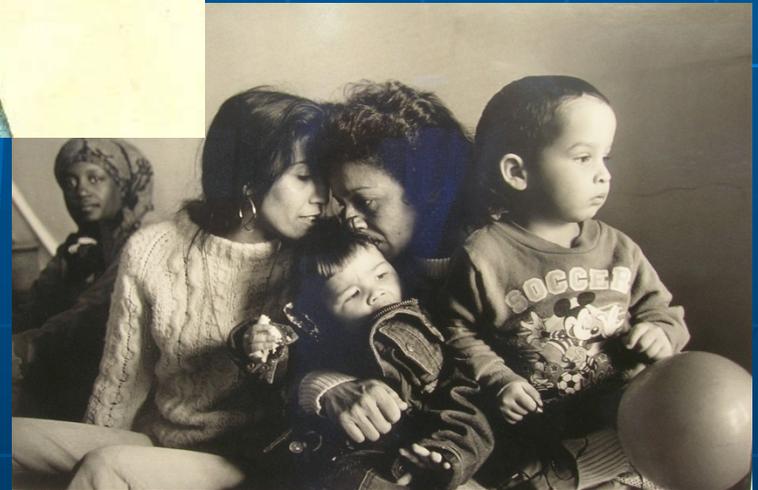


**LibraryLinkNJ  
May 2, 2018**

Here? Why Is It Important For You?



# Where Are We Now? ...NOT reflecting



**perception**





How we see the world  
is how we  
**experience** the world.

Our perceptions  
are our ultimate  
**Freedom.**

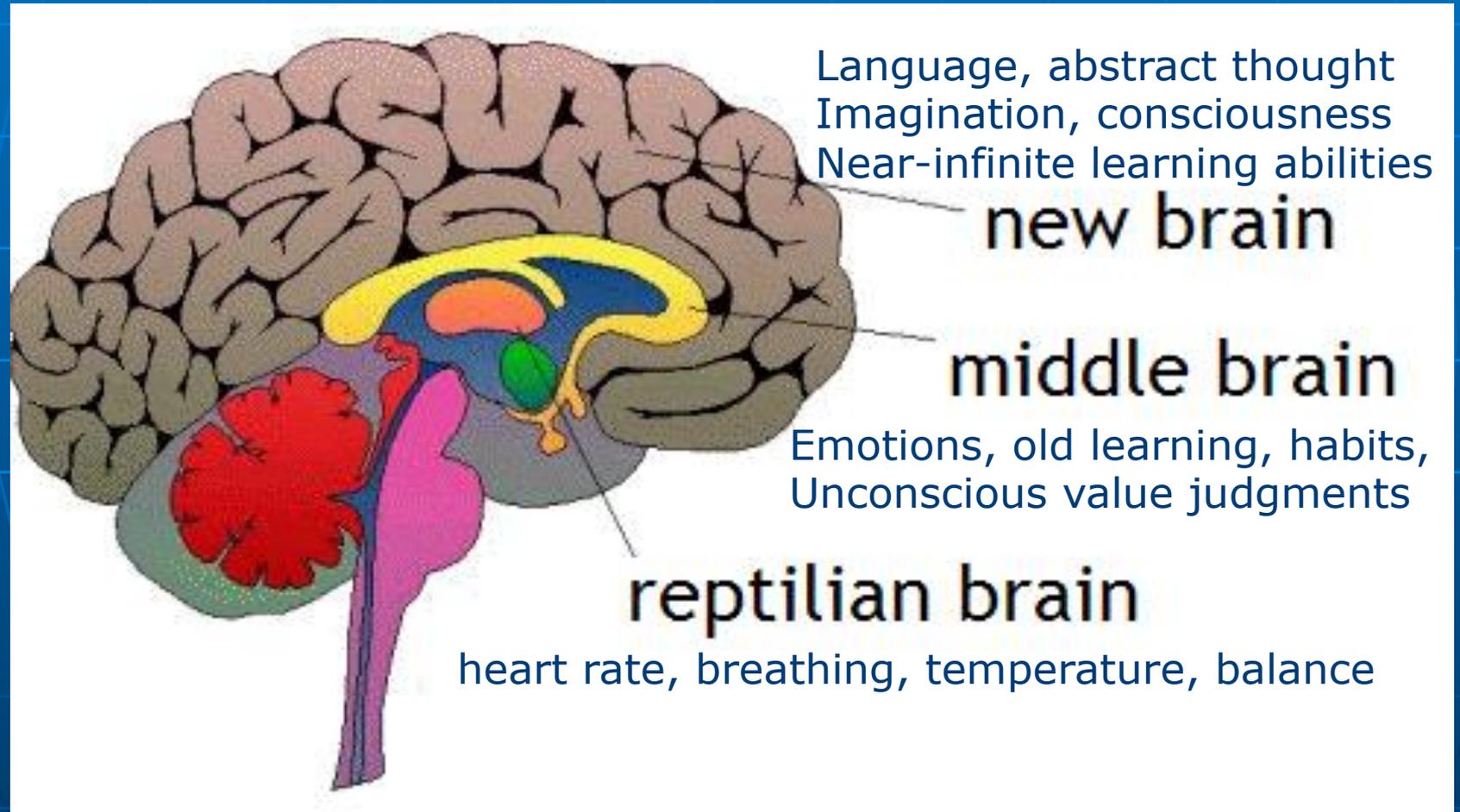
Victor Frankl

# Perception...



Each of us only sees a part of the whole...

# Evolutionary Considerations



# Reactivity and Reflection

## Why is Reflection so HARD?

The process....

Reflection



Consciousness



Impulse (Reaction)

PERCEPTION

Sensation

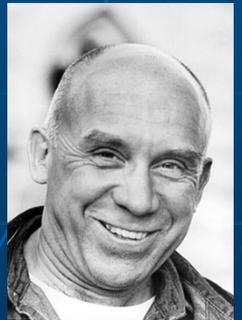
Form

# Why Reflect?

Those who attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening their own self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others.

They will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of their own obsessions, their aggressiveness, their ego-centered ambition, their delusions about ends and means, their doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.

Thomas Merton



**Empathy**

# Mirror Neurons

V S Ramachadran, UCLA



The Vagus nerve...

# Empathy

Remember:

Our empathy circuitry is only activated if we perceive someone as a member of our group\*

Whom do you perceive as 'other', or even 'enemy'.

\*From the work of Emile Bruneau, Brain and Cognitive Sciences Department, M.I.T.

# Cognitive and Behavioral Distancing From Those Who Are Not Like Ourselves

...the dominant response to people perceived as  
'other'

Both interpersonal and institutional

- Lack of exposure, experience
- Ignorance

Non-normative among those *in actual  
relationship* with those in the target group

# What are the Consequences?

- Moral Exclusion: see as 'other' and lesser. Dehumanization. Development of 'isms'.
- Lack of empathy, sympathy, compassion
- Stereotyping
- Discrimination
  - Exclusion, including institutional
  - E.g. Legal system, Housing, Medical Care, Education

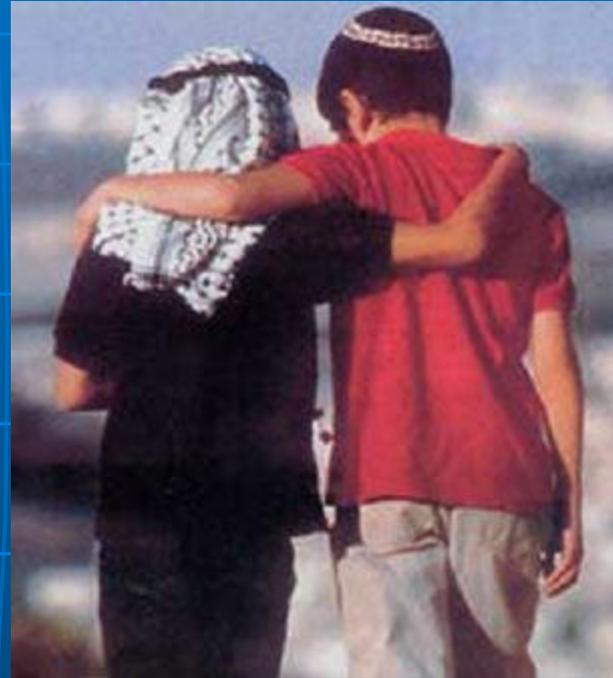
# Good News!!!

- TO REPEAT!!!!

Distancing is non-normative among those in actual relationship with those in the target group

- The antidote:  
**Relationship**

- Justice: “Right relationship”
- Honoring our Common Humanity

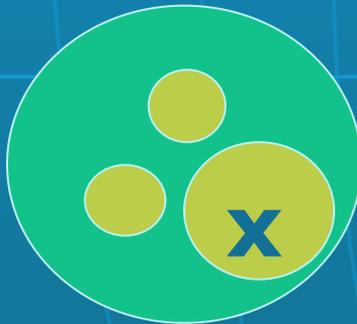




# Inclusion



He drew a circle to keep me out  
Heretic! Rebel!.. a thing to flout  
But Love and I had the wit to win  
We drew a circle, and took him in



# Can We Dissolve The Barriers Between Ourselves?



One tool for the tool box:  
JUST Communication

# JUST Listening

One definition of Justice is “Right Relationship”



Listening itself is an act of Justice

Fairness, equality, respect, inherent dignity of every person  
Honoring our Common Humanity

# Personal and Social Transformation

Listening to Another



Inner Listening



Listening is the oldest and perhaps most powerful tool of healing.

Our listening creates sanctuary for the homeless parts within the other person.

Rachel Naomi Remen



Are you ever been listened to?

Or Not?

What is the effect, either way?



“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life.”

Brenda Ueland

Creativity, Empowerment...

# Physiological Effects of Listening



# Some Effects of Stress

- Elevated blood pressure
- Corticosteroids: Impairment of immune system: disease
- Death of some neurons
- Impaired capacity to learn
- Increased anxiety and depression
- **Increased sense of loss of control, perception of threat, negative beliefs/conclusions**



# Parasympathetic System

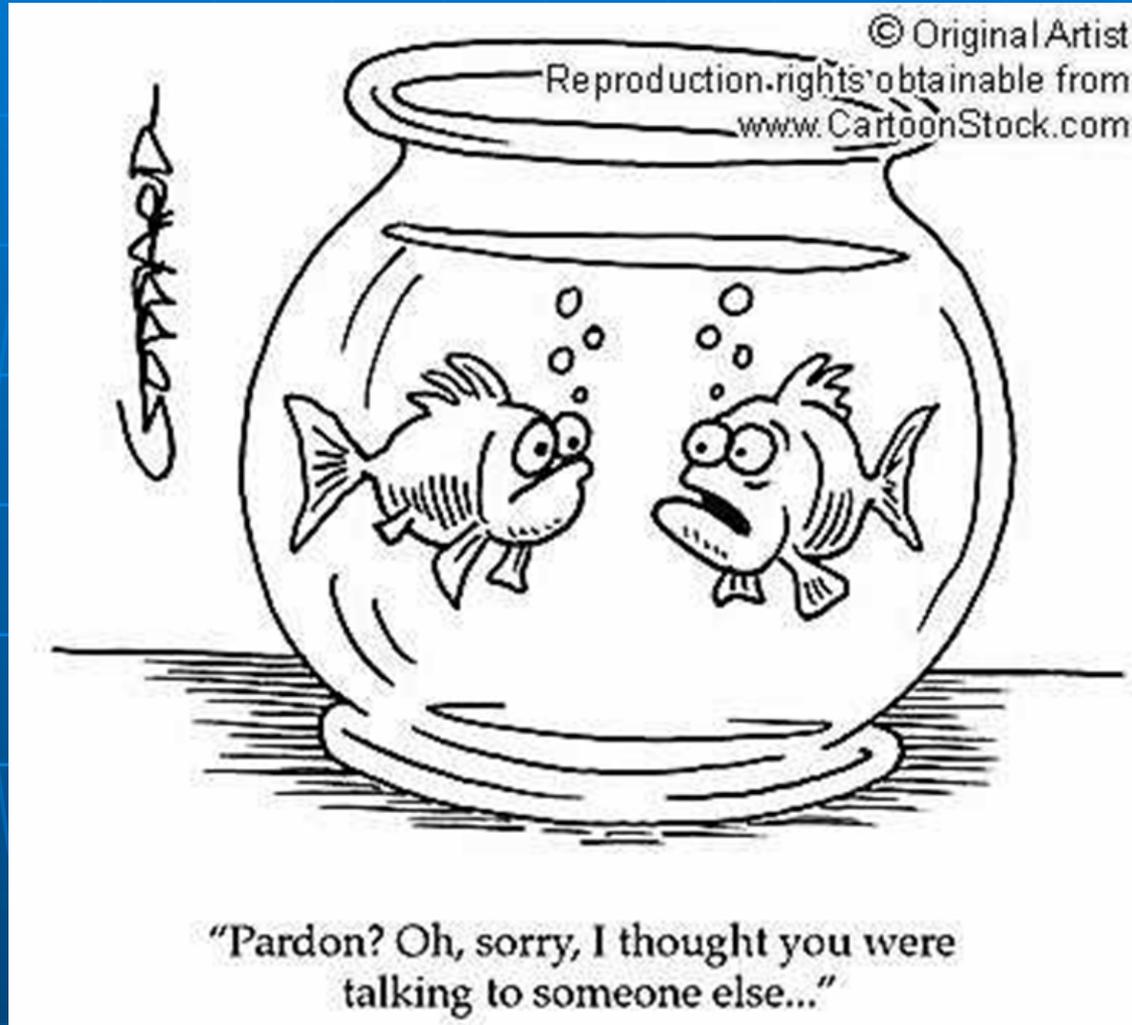
Creativity

Innovation  
(Enhanced  
Problem Solving)

Well Being

Enthusiasm  
Positivity

Happiness/  
Even Joy



How to Listen Without Our Egos Getting  
In The Way

# Active Listening.....one of many listening modalities

- Encouraging
- Restating
- Reflecting
- Summarizing



But this:

- can create more mental distraction/egoic behavior
- does not address power imbalances

# Consciousness: Waking Up



Being Intentional  
**REFLECTIVE!!!**



# Shifting the Listening Paradigm

How Do We Do It?

# Listening Filters

## 1. The Content of Our Own Minds

## 2. Socio-cultural filters

## 3. Our Egos



### ■ Content of our own Minds

- What IS the content of your thought?

# Listening Filter One

The contents of your own mind.....



**What are  
you  
thinking?**

**Right now?**

# The Process:

Examine Your Internal Monologue:  
What goes on in your head?

- Thinking of the rest of your to-do list
- Thinking of what to say in response
- Thinking of a solution
- Thinking of why the other person is wrong
- Thinking about a similar thing that happened to you
- Thinking about what you have to do next
- Worrying about your problems
- Worrying about 3,000 things that *might* happen

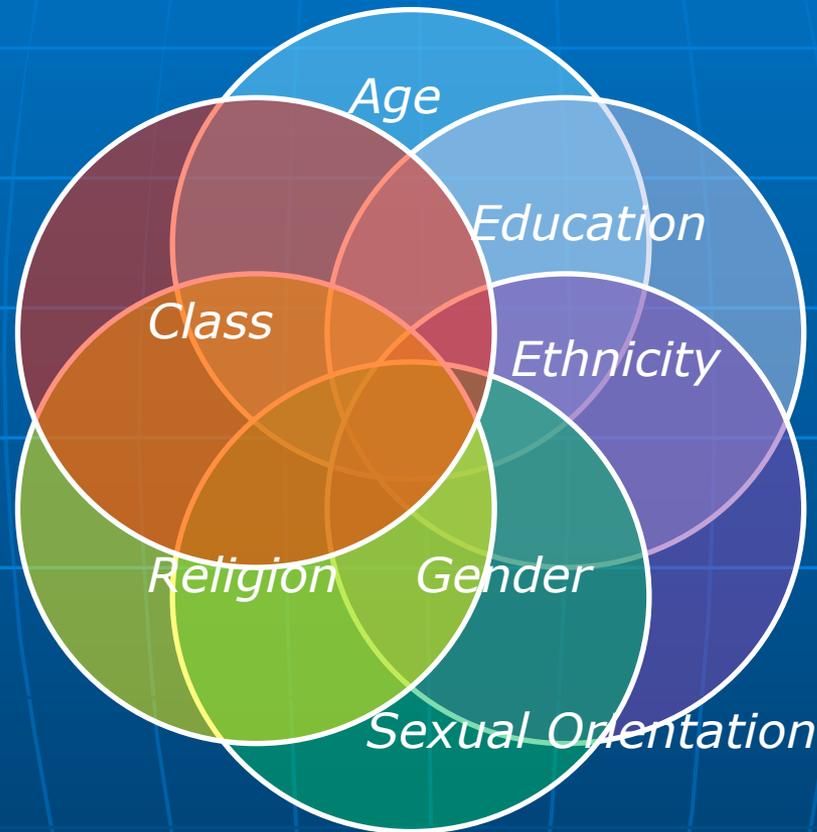
# Relevant Socio-Cultural Factors



Based on the work of:

- Nancy Boyd-Franklin, Nancy. *Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American Experience*.
- Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto, editors. *Ethnicity and Family Therapy, 3rd Edition*.
- Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men In Conversation*, and *Talking Nine To Five: Women and Men at Work*
  - *And others.....*

# Filters, continued....



# Socio-Cultural Rules and Norms

- Hidden Assumptions about:
  - possessions
  - money
  - time
  - education
  - language
  - world view
  - personality
  - motivations
  - gender roles
  - family



Enormous variation in norms and beliefs

# Culture and Custom

- **Non verbals**
  - **Biases/Prejudices/  
Assumptions**
- A COMPLICATED ISSUE**
- **Normalization of Bias**
  - **Need for intentional strategies to address**

**See Project Implicit:  
[https://  
implicit.harvard.edu/  
implicit](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit)**



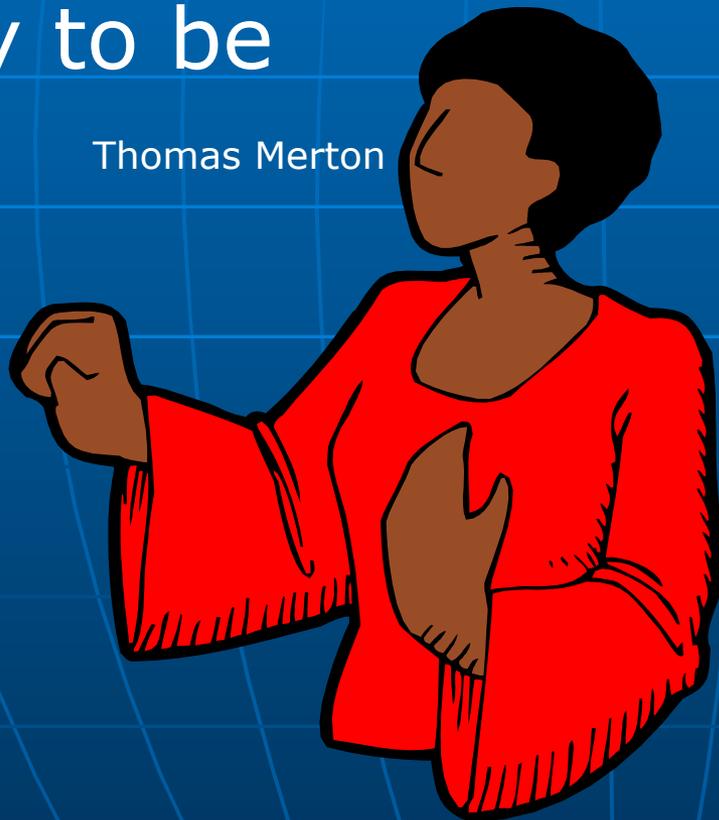
# Four Helpful Attitudes/Behaviors

1. Not Knowing
2. Genuine Curiosity
3. Awareness of Personal and Socio-Cultural Filters
4. Focus on **EXPERIENCE**, not beliefs, convictions

# Silence...

It is not speaking  
that breaks our  
silence, but the  
anxiety to be  
heard.

Thomas Merton



Most people do not  
listen with the intent  
to *understand*.

Most people listen  
with the intent to  
*reply*.

~ Stephen R. Covey

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

One More Filter....

**Our Egos**

# EGO

- Ego: noun
- 1. the True **Self** ...the healthy ego
- Vs.
- 2. The **False self**: an inflated sense of self – significance (high *or* low)

# What do these look like?

<b>True Self</b>	<b>False self</b>
<b>Feeling of Enoughness</b>	<b>Reactive</b>
<b>Compassionate</b>	<b>Passive Aggressive</b>
<b>Authentic</b>	<b>Aggressive</b>
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>Defensive</b>
<b>Accepting of Others</b>	<b>Fearful</b>
<b>Curious</b>	<b>Jealous</b>
<b>Full of Possibility</b>	<b>Hyper-Sensitive</b>
<b>Able to Let Go</b>	<b>Easily Offended</b>
<b>Loves Unconditionally</b>	<b>Wrapped Up in Self</b>
<b>Experiences Freedom</b>	<b>Has Own Agenda</b>
<b>Lives in Present Moment</b>	<b>Withholds Full Self</b>
	<b>Feels Separate: Us vs. Them</b>

# RECOGNIZING IMPEDIMENTS TO LISTENING: UNCONSCIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF EGO

Adapted from Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*



- Desiring, seeking, or demanding recognition for something you did
  - Being angry, upset, disgruntled, or 'holding on' if you don't get it
- Trying to get attention by talking about yourself, your experiences, your issues etc.
- Giving your opinion when nobody has asked for it and it makes no difference to the situation



- Taking things personally, feeling offended
- Making yourself right and others wrong through futile mental or verbal complaining, gymnastics, explaining.
- Wanting to be seen, or appear important.
  - Bragging, self-aggrandizing speech
  - Exaggerating/inflating accomplishments
  - Belittling others, actions that diminish, demean, or are meant to embarrass others



- Being more concerned with how the other person sees you than with the other person
- Trying to make an impression on others through knowledge, status, physical strength, possessions, good looks, etc. For some, boasting of the OPPOSITE, e.g. a simple lifestyle, lack of possessions, lack of a privileged background, etc.
- Bringing about temporary ego inflation through angry reaction against someone or something





# REFLECT

Which of these behaviors do I own?

How and when do I utilize them?

How have they served me in the past? Is it time to let them go?

**Have Compassion For Yourself...**

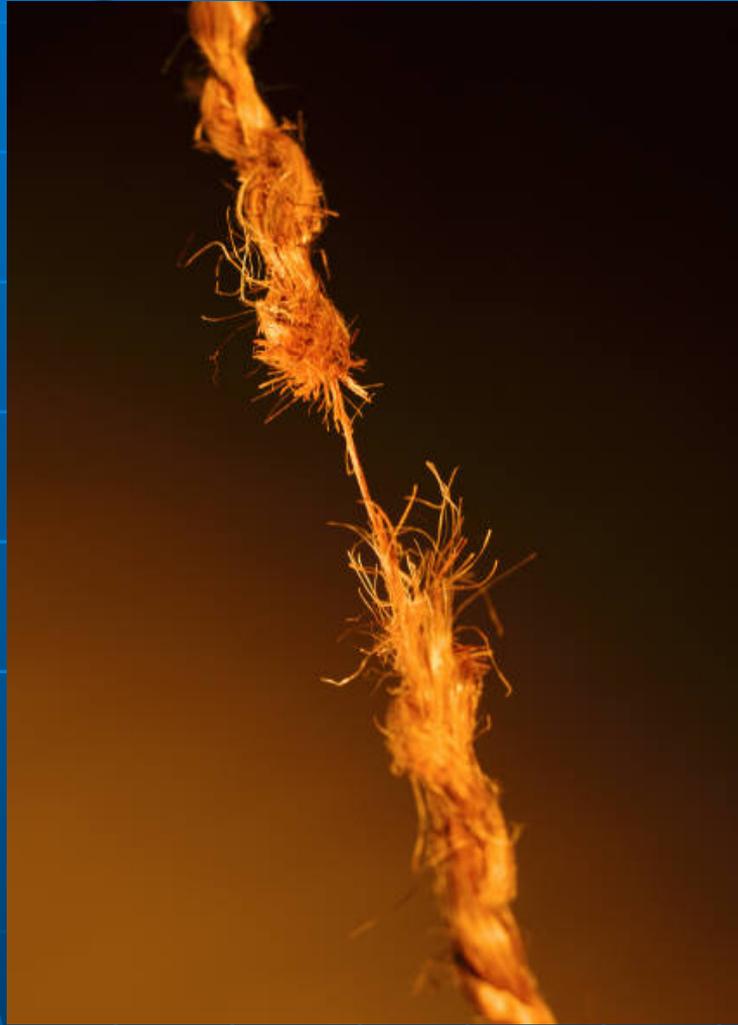
**This births Compassion for others**

- What we dislike in ourselves, we despise in others.

**“If you spot it, you got it”**

**AGAIN: Compassion for self flows into compassion for others.**

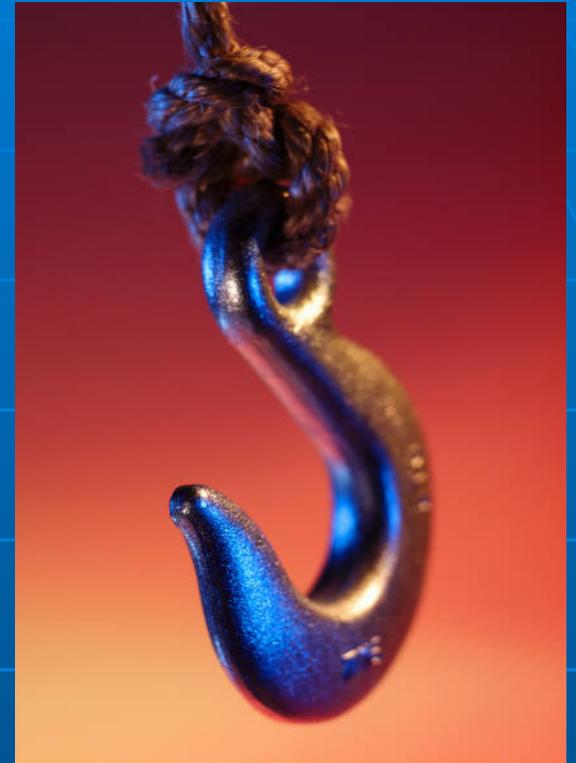
# What is your vulnerability?



*Know What 'Hooks' You*

And...

- Focus on *experience,* not convictions.



AVOID GETTING HOOKED

- **Respond with Strategic Questions, not statements.**
- **If you can't think of anything to say, don't say anything! Experiment with silence.**



# I learned

- **silence from the talkative, and**
- **tolerance from the intolerant, and**
- **kindness from the unkind.**

**- Khalil Gibran -**



# The Process: WAIT!!!!!!

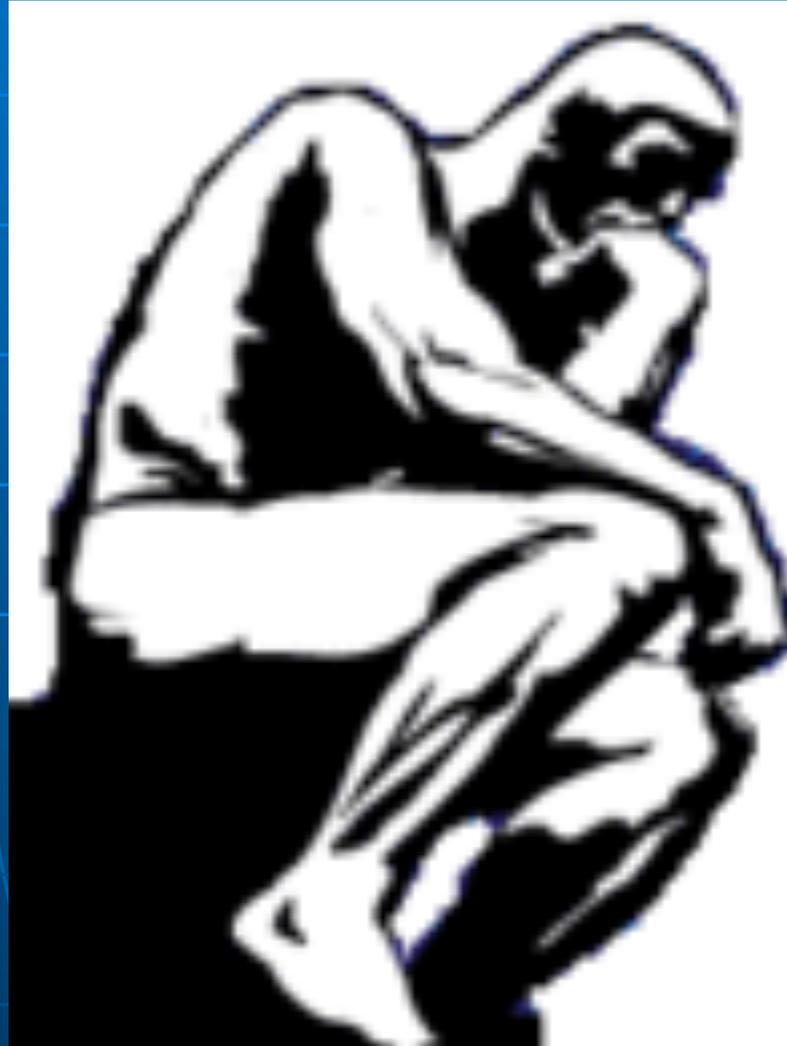
- **W**ake Up!!!!
- **A**wareness! Be aware of your Inner Chatterbox, Cultural Assumptions, Unconscious Bias, and EGO!
- **I**ntend understanding, focus, curiosity, non-judgment
- Be **T**houghtful and **T**eachable. Reflect, don't React. Invite, Don't Fight. Know you do not know... and ask.

# Invite, Don't Fight!



“Tell me your story, Say more!,  
What in your *experience*.....?”

# Reflect, Don't React!



But first: Two more things...



# Thing One...

**Introverts!** (Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Won't Stop Talking*)

And

# Thing Two...

**Brainstorming:** Jonathan Lehrer: "Groupthink: The brainstorming Myth"

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/30/groupthink>

# What To Do?????

- **Know that you do not know.  
Be CONSCIOUS of this.**
- **Engage in a ‘generous interpretation’  
of behaviors and comments**



# Abandon Judgments

Generous  
Interpretation

Parallel Universe  
Thinking

***"The more afraid we  
are, the more certain  
we become."*** Brene Brown



# Thing 1. Strategic Questioning: Asking the best question



What questions help people and groups clarify  
their own issues?

# Potential of Strategic Questioning

see

[Fran Peavey, Strategic Questioning Manual for more detail](#)

- Greater Clarity
- Greater Understanding
- Surfacing of Alternatives:
  - innovation!
  - Creativity!
- Improved Outcomes: Personal Commitment
- Empowerment
- Trust



# Strategic Questioning Question Categories

*Strategic Questioning : An Experiment in Communication of the Second Kind, by Fran Peavey*

- 1. FOCUS QUESTIONS
- 2. OBSERVATION QUESTIONS
- 3. FEELING QUESTIONS
- 4. VISION QUESTIONS
  
- Moving into Strategic Questions.....
  
- 5. CHANGE QUESTIONS
- 6. CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES QUESTIONS
- 7. PERSONAL INVENTORY AND SUPPORT QUESTIONS
- 8. PERSONAL ACTION STEP(S) QUESTIONS

# LISTEN FOR THE WISDOM



Validity of **EXPERIENCE**...not criticism of **BELIEF**

# And ask yourself: What Conversation Am I IN?\*

1. A ***debate*** is a formal contest of skill in reasoned argument, a discussion of opposing reasons.
2. An ***argument*** is a less formal version of a debate. Each side gives reasons for or against a proposition. There is no formal end to this conversation, so it's not always clear which side, if any, prevailed.

3. A ***discussion*** : each person presents and defends his or her viewpoint, pros and cons are considered, and ***a result is the outcome.*** It is important to reach a conclusion, to find an answer. In formal meetings, there is an agenda. In informal discussions, each person is often speaking to ***their own unwritten agenda.***

4. A ***dialogue*** is an open-ended conversation of exploration and inquiry... to seek mutual understanding. *A dialogue is open to new ideas and new ways of thinking.*

5. Social Conversations → Chitcat

■ Other forms: Negotiation, Mediation, Brainstorming, Counsel



"To listen is to continually give up all expectation and to give our attention, completely and freshly, to what is before us, not really knowing what we will hear or what that will mean.

In the practice of our days, to listen is to lean in, softly, *with a willingness to be changed by what we hear.*"

Mark Nepo

# Your Thoughts? Your Questions?



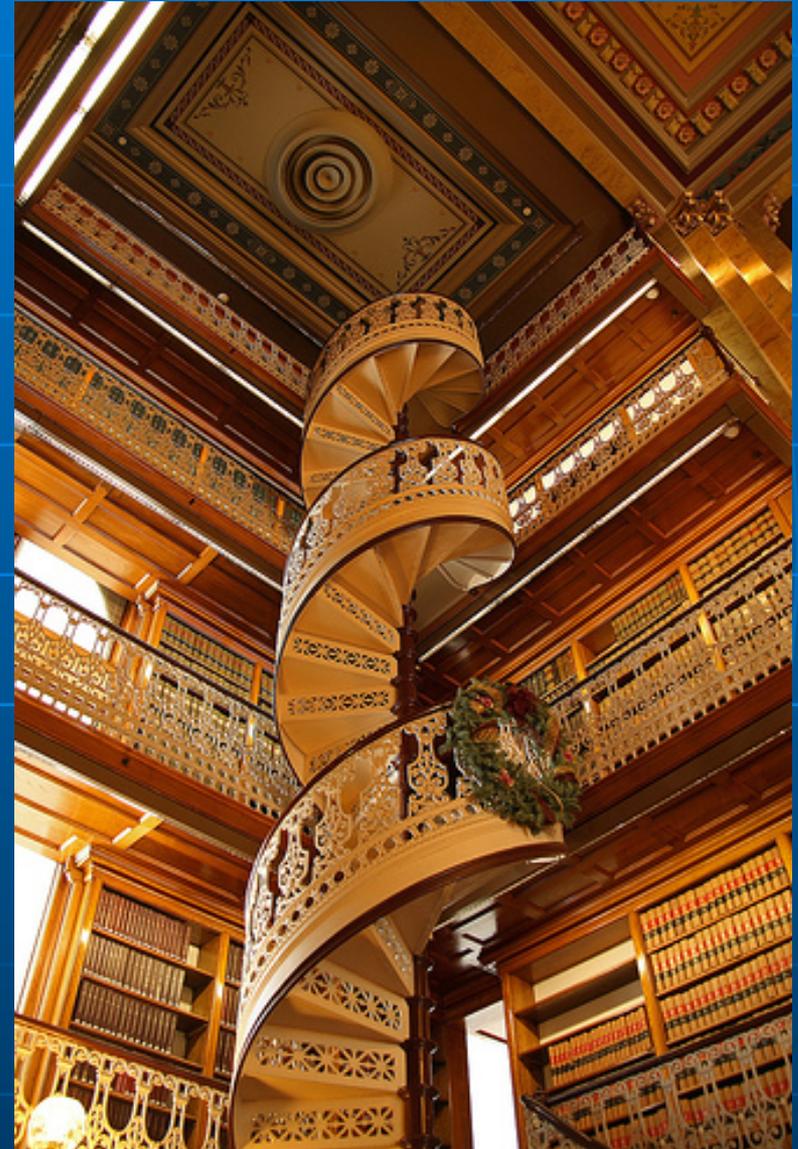
How and where could you utilize this?

# Listening Practice



Reflect, then discuss:

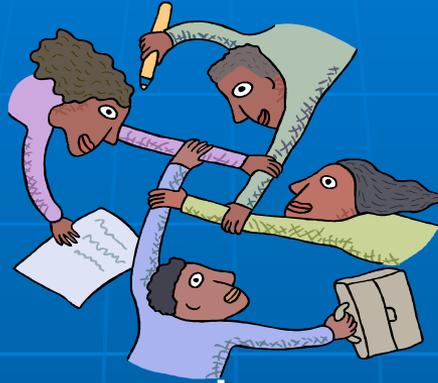
Which of your most cherished values is central to your work as a librarian? What does it look like concretely in practice?



# Discussion Practice at Home!!!!

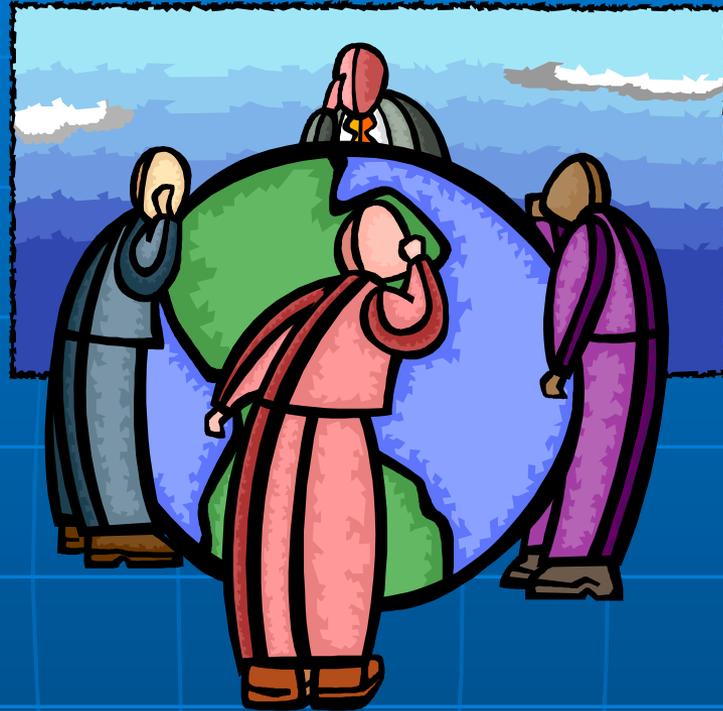


# HOMEPLAY!



- Review
- Observe your own dynamics
- Reflect
- Practice
- Observe other's dynamics
- Practice Compassion

“I am like you. We're all in the same boat together.”



**Sharon Browning**  
**JUST Listening**  
**[sbrowning@justlistening.net](mailto:sbrowning@justlistening.net)**  
**[www.justlistening.net](http://www.justlistening.net)**

# Additional Considerations

If we have time...

# What conversations do you consider 'difficult' ?

- Difficult Topics
- Difficult Issues
- Difficult People
- What hooks YOU?



# The Anatomy of Trust

See the work of Brené Brown

- Boundaries
  - Reliability
  - Accountability
  - Vault
  - Integrity
  - Non-judgment
  - Generosity
- 
- Begin with *Self-Trust*

# The Nature of Reality, Fake News and other quandaries

What is True? What is Real?

Two thoughts:

One:

The Thomas Theorem

Something is real if it has real effects.

If we define something as real, it has  
real consequences

# The Nature of Reality\*

- Objective: Things exist independently of our beliefs and feelings
- Subjective: Depends on my personal beliefs and feelings
- Intersubjective: Depends upon communication between humans. Meaning arises within a network of shared stories. Human-created reality.
- \* Description of the “Web of Meaning”, Harari, *Homo Deus* p.143 +

How does this provide hope for our current condition?

# Suggested Topics for Dialogue

- Whom do you care most about in your life and what is your dream for them?
- What does it feel like to be an American? What is the best part of being an American?
- What are your most deeply held and cherished values? What do they look like in practice?

- What issue in your life causes you the most concern? Ideally, how would you like to see it resolved?
- What do you think needs to happen to bring the country together in these divisive political times? What can you do personally to begin the healing?
- What are you grateful for?

- In reflecting on xxxx, I feel\_\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_\_\_ (why do you feel this way?).
- How do the actions and policies of the current administration impact you directly? What is your personal stake in what is happening politically in our country? Please give examples from your own life, your own story.
- What would allow us to work *together* to address and solve our common problems?

- What do you need to form trusting relationships in which we can truly listen to and understand each other?

# Your Thoughts? Your Issues?

