



Forgotten Art of Deep Listening, by Kay Lindahl

Think of the difference it would make if each of us felt really listened to when we spoke. Imagine the time it would save to be heard the first time around, instead of having to repeat ourselves over and over again. Envision a conversation in which each person is listened to with respect, even those whose views are different from ours. This is all possible in conversations of the heart, when we practice the sacred art of listening. It takes intention and commitment. We need to slow down to expand our awareness of the possibilities of deep listening. The simple act of listening to each other can transform all of our relationships. Indeed, it can transform the world, as we practice being the change we wish to see in the world. "When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen." There are some interesting statistics that validate this claim by Ernest Hemingway. Most of us spend about 45 percent of our waking hours listening, yet we are distracted, preoccupied, or forgetful about 75 percent of that time. Marketing studies indicate that the average attention span for adults is 22 seconds. (Think about television commercials, which usually last 15 to 30 seconds). When someone has finished speaking, we remember about half of what we heard. Within a few hours, we can recall only about 20 percent. The number of adults who have had any training in listening skills is less than 5 percent of our population. It hasn't been part of the curriculum in most schools. After hearing these statistics, a business executive reflected: "This is very interesting. I just realized that I spend a great deal of time preparing myself to speak. I don't think I have ever prepared myself to listen." Deep listening is a forgotten art. Listening is not a passive activity. It's not about being quiet or even hearing the words. It is an action, and it takes energy to listen. --Kay Lindahl