



## If You Really Pay Attention, by Paula Underwood

When I was a little bitty kiddy, about five, my Dad began a process anytime somebody came and said something to us, my dad would say, "You remember what he said, honey girl?" I would tell my father what the person said until I got so good at it that I could repeat verbatim even long presentations of what the person had said.

And he did this all the time.

Finally, one day there was this old gentleman, Richard Thompson. I still remember his name, he lived across the street. And every time my Dad started to mow the lawn, there came Mr. Thompson. And so I would stand out there.

Dad says, "You might come and listen to this man, honey girl. He's pretty interesting." And so I listened to him, and then my dad would say, "What did you hear him say?" And I would tell him.

Well, eventually I was repeating all the stories he liked to share with my dad verbatim. I knew them all by heart.

And my Dad says, "You're getting pretty good at that. But did you hear his heart?" And I thought, what? So I went around for days with my ear to people's chest trying to hear their hearts.

Finally my Dad created another learning situation for me by asking my mother to read an article from the newspaper. He says "Well, I guess if you want to understand that article, you have to read between the lines."

I thought, "Oh, read between the lines. Hear between the words."

So the next time I listened to Mr. Thompson's stories, I tried to listen between the words. My Dad said, "I know you know his story, but did you hear his heart?" And I said, "Yes. He is very lonely and comes and shares his memories with you again and again because he's asking you to keep him company in his memories."

It just came out of me. In other words, my heart echoed his heart.

And when you can listen at that level, then you can hear not only the people. If you really pay attention, you can hear what the Universe is saying.

--Paula Underwood, clan mother of the Turtle clan, Iroquois nation

