



**Deep listening:** We find a partner to pair up with for this exercise (a team member or stakeholder we are working with, or even our spouse or neighbor). We sit opposite each other, get comfortable, relax, and warmly look at each other in the eyes. We aim to maintain this eye contact throughout this exercise. One person is going to speak first, for three minutes, and the other person is going to listen without interrupting. Then we are going to swap over, with the other person speaking for three minutes.

We can explore personal reflective questions such as: What do I most deeply and profoundly love? What would I like to change about my life? What are my greatest fears? Or, we can explore work related questions such as: What is really concerning me at the moment at work? How do I feel about the changes afoot in my work area? If I could change two things about my work-life what would they be? What is holding me back from improving my work-life? If I could have any job within the organization what would it be and why? What is the deepest and most profound purpose my organization ought to have?

If time allows, it is great to start with general personal questions first and then explore more specific work related questions in further rounds. Once the pair is clear on the question they are going to speak about, they agree who is going to speak first for three minutes, while the other listens attentively and fully.

The listener should refrain from any bodily queues that could influence the speaker such as smiling, frowning or nodding. We listen with a blank yet open and warm expression and maintain eye contact throughout. We remain aware of how present we are while listening, catching ourselves when caught up in distractions, or thoughts about what is being said. We keep bringing our attention back to fully listening. As said before, this act of listening is a form of meditation in itself as it helps us free ourselves from ego-chatter and remain present. This helps us become more receptive. The speaker will, either consciously or unconsciously, sense this deeper awareness opening up between us allowing for a deepening of authentic heart-felt sharing.

The speaker knows there is space to say whatever comes up without fear of interruption or judgement. When we are speaking it is important for us to tune into our bodymind, feeling into our heart and gut to sense what wants to be spoken through us with regard to the question. This is not about answers or right or wrong responses, this is a general inquiry and whatever comes up is absolutely fine. This helps the speaker cultivate somatic awareness while speaking; learning to listen to the heart and gut and how this informs us. We speak spontaneously and freely as we go with pauses and spaces for stillness as-and-when it feels right. It does not matter if the speaker says little or gets into a flow and pours out a lot, nothing is right or wrong here and all is beyond judgement.

The facilitator calls time after three minutes (or if no facilitator, the listener calls time). Then there are a few seconds of stillness before we swap over. In this space between swapping over, the pair can show gratitude, smile, say thank you before the next session starts, and the process is repeated over again.



**Leading by Nature  
by Giles Hutchins**



This deep listening practice can also be adapted for three people, where we still share as a pair sitting opposite each other with a third person taking notes and then providing feedback at the time of change over. We rotate round until each of the three people have taken part in all of the activities (listening, feeding-back, speaking).

This practical embodied experience of reciprocated sharing is a great way to start embedding personal and organizational gnosis into the organization. It requires no training or budget, just some basic ground rules, yet has a profound impact.

Deep listening can be consciously brought into how we listen and engage throughout the day in all our meetings and conversations. When we are in a meeting, we can catch ourselves, notice how we are being, what is going on in our head, the type of inner-dialogue, the judgements, the frustrations, and opinions that form in us. We can make a note on this either mentally or jotting it down, journaling as we go.

We can utilize every interaction as a practice to sense into when we are actually being fully present, really tuning-in to what is being said with our full attention, and when we are allowing judgements, emotions, distractions, and such like, to fill our awareness. When we sense this ego-chatter, ask ourselves the following exploratory questions: Am I judging others? Am I rehearsing what I am going to say? Am I getting caught up in ruminating head-chatter? Or am I being receptive to 'what is'? Can I sense all my ways of knowing, my intuition, my felt-senses, my emotional intelligence as well as what is going on in my thinking head? Can I allow myself to sense a deeper stillness beneath the noise of my thoughts and feelings? What can I pick up and tune-in to beyond my immediate thoughts and judgements? The more we practice this self-awareness throughout our work day, the more we cultivate a deepening of 'knowing thy self'.