

Listening exercise – Try this with a friend and notice how it is for you, both as a listener and a speaker.



The goal of this exercise is to experience the gift of simple attentive, accepting listening without the pressure of being “helpful” or giving advice etc

Speaker

Choose something problematic that you would like to talk about for about 10 minutes. It needn't be very deep or serious. You needn't tell the whole background of the situation – you can just start in with what you are feeling or what is problematic for you. Try to notice what you are feeling in your body as you talk. Try to talk in chunks (eg 3 sentences at a time) so the listener has space to respond and there is not too much to remember.

Listener

Just listen. No questions, no comments, no advice. Your goal is for the listener to feel accepted and understood. Make eye contact, use nods and brief comments (um, hm, yes, ok sure) to communicate attention and understanding.

After 10 minutes switch places – the listener talks and the speaker listens.

Take a few minutes to discuss what this experience was like.

(Adapted from Gray and Marder eds 2009, p. 86)