

Excerpt from my upcoming book 'The Power of Extraordinary Listening'

>Introduction:

>>In the summer of 1999 I had an experience that changed the direction of
>my life. I was leading peace building work with a group of young people
>from the various factions in Bosnia. We brought them to the U.S. for
>leadership training. Together we went to a remote Island on Lake of the
>Woods in Northern Minnesota.

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>If you have traveled internationally you know that there is often
>communication without words per se. Communication takes place in a
>spirit of desiring to connect with someone. Though I do not speak their
>language, I found myself laughing with them at jokes I did not
>understand. Communication takes place on many levels.

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>Asked to encapsulate what we learned at the closing ceremony, the idea
>hit me in a few simple words:

>"The action that creates peace is listening."

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>After the insight I describe I went back to the dojo and practiced it
>kinesthetically. The Aikido has gotten better' and notably more fun.

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>Communicating creates community. The way in which we connect with one
>another, the spirit of our communication, develops the character of our
>communities and the quality of our lives. Improved human relations will
>come about through improving the way we pay attention to each other.

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>It is best if you can talk to someone in their language. The only way
>to learn their language is to listen. In Aikido we call it blending.
>Sometimes we do it more effectively and sincerely than others. God
>knows how often on the mat I want to 'talk'. I just want them to
>'listen'. When I use my technique to force them down is it really
>Aikido in the spiritual sense of the founder's reconciliation?

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>Listening is far beyond a verbal exchange or an exchange of information.

> It is learning with the intention of better understanding what is
>important to someone and why. How do they assemble data into
>information into meaning? Listening is connecting to the meaning that
>forms another person's perception.

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>Diplomatic communication between countries can generate relationships of
>war or peace. When people feel unheard they amplify their message until
>they do. Terrorism is a primary example. From the first club to the
>hydrogen bomb, from the war within to the on-going tensions throughout
>the globe, people feel unheard. Listening is a most difficult and
>valuable skill. It changes the quality of our lives.

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>When countries can listen to each other, when they can speak to each
>other and are heard, they enrich each other through trade and cultural
>exchange. When they cannot, they tend to develop fear-based
>relationships, arms races and war. Nations are made up of people. The
>psychology is similar. The quality of diplomacy in the communication
>between individuals sets up a relationship of friendship and support or
>antipathy.

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>I remember watching a couple on the edge of divorce. Once the anger
>seemed more important to them than the love, it controlled their
>behavior. They said things and did things to each other that I think

>would have shocked even them, if they could have seen them selves from a
>distance. I remember thinking to myself I would never treat anyone that
>way, especially someone I fell asleep next to. What I found the most
>upsetting was I knew how much they loved each other.

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>Their behavior was surprising. I understand our feelings are intense. I
>understand I also react without thinking. However, the whole experience
>emphasized for me how important it is to pay attention to the way we
>communicate. If at those moments they could have seen them selves and
>the repercussions of their behavior I have to believe they would have
>acted differently.

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>There are endless stories about business failures based on the inability
>of the leaders to communicate. I cannot count the number of executives
>I have sat with who were having difficulty communicating with each
>other. These are some of the brightest and most capable people on the
>planet. They earn salaries in multiples of what most people can even
>dream about. These people held the responsibility for thousands of
>employee's lives. In cases they were responsible for hundreds of
>thousands, even millions of customers. No matter how capable, no matter
>how well paid, no matter how educated, once reactive behavior hijacked
>their attention none of those things mattered.

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>We are careless about how we create meaning. If we saw the effect of
>the way we talk to ourselves and each other, if we understood the power
>of our communication in the creation of our world, we'd bring a higher
>quality of attention to the way we generate and share meaning.

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>The quality of our communication is precious. No amount of attention
>paid to it could be too much. Imagine if you could improve your
>communication with everyone that you encounter. Take a moment and
>envision what that might be like. The value of good listening is
>immeasurable. The principle is so simple as to be deceptive. Pay
>attention. You will be surprised at what it will buy. The way we
>listen and form meaning is the most powerful point of leverage in our lives.

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>Communication directly impacts our ability to live together, work
>together, to learn, teach, to make friends and to do business. Our
>ability to share understanding affects the bottom line of every company
>and creates the wealth of every society.

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>"Since both the benefits and the dangers inherent in listening are
>equally great I am of the opinion that listening ought to be a constant
>topic of discussion in one's own mind and with other people. This is
>especially so because it is noticeable that most people go about the
>matter in the wrong way: they practice speaking before they have got
>used to listening. They think that speaking takes study and care, but
>benefits will accrue from even a careless approach to listening. Some
>people think that the Speaker has a function well the listener does
>nothing.

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>Proper listening is the foundation of proper living."

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Plutarch

>>After this experience I founded The Listening Institute dedicated to
>increasing human wealth through the power of harmony. In honor of
>passing on O Sensei's teachings to those who will never take a martial

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>arts class.  
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>"Rely on harmony to activate your manifold powers and create a beautiful  
>world." O Sensei  
>  
>Thanks for 'listening'  
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