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The Power of Effective Listening

Do people really listen to one another any more?

Being an **effective listener** can be one of the most powerful life skills you can have in life. I have found *Empathic Listening* an invaluable tool in my coaching practice. Not only do my clients feel heard and validated but they also find that when they apply this skill in their every day life, it can help them enormously. It is a powerful asset in their business dealings as well as in their close relationships. In modern day society, most of us have forgotten the art of how to really tune in and listen to each other. We are caught up in our world of cell phones and blackberries while trying to hold a conversation with one another. Our minds are often preoccupied and the conversation literally goes in one ear and out the other. Wouldn't it be nice to have a conversation with someone where you not only have their undivided attention but also sense that they are really interested in what you are saying?

The reason *Empathic Listening* is such an incredibly powerful communication skill is that it lets the other person know you are *present* and *interested* in what they are saying. According to the dictionary, empathy is a way of "experiencing as one's own of the feelings of another." When using this skill in communicating with another, you are putting aside your own values, needs and judgments and focusing on the essence of what the other person is thinking, feeling and needing .You acknowledge this person's words by looking them in the eye, nodding your head and responding to them in a way that lets them know you are "there" with them. Your focus stays on the speaker until the person is complete in what they are sharing. An example of this would be: If the speaker is telling you about how they just paid off their credit card debt, your empathic response would be something to the effect of, "That must be a huge relief!" or "You must feel so good!" By acknowledging them in this way, the person feels heard. So many times, the speaker will make a statement and the listener will turn the subject matter back to themselves. Here is an example of NOT being an empathic listener: The speaker says, "I just lost 25 pounds. This is the first time in my life I've been able to lose the weight and keep it off." The non-empathic listener would reply by saying, " I remember the first time I lost a lot of weight. I was so happy until the pounds starting creeping back on, etc, etc." This listener has completely ignored the speakers "win" and emphasized that they are more concerned with themselves. Empathic listening can be a wonderful tool to increase the intimacy in a relationship. When the focus stays on the speaker, both people share a more meaningful exchange.

Try the following exercise with a partner. Take turns sharing about a topic that is important to you (i.e. a problem you are having trouble solving, something exciting happening in your life that you want to share, etc.) The person who is doing the "empathic" listening, should really tune in and pay attention to what the speaker is saying. Keep eye contact, make comments like, "I hear you" or "I understand what you are saying." You don't have to try and solve the person's problem, you just need to let

them know that they are being heard. Reverse roles and do the same exercise again. Experience the bond you feel with the other person when you listen in this way.

Empathic listening is about the "quality" of your listening to another person. When a person feels like they've really been heard and understood, they feel validated and cared for. By embracing the skill of listening from your heart instead of your head, you will find your relationships gaining a deeper quality and meaning to them.

To book a complimentary coaching consultation, contact Jana Hollingsworth at **jana@dreamsnmotion.com.** Jana is a Life Coach and Human Design Analyst **www.dreamsnmotion.com**