



## R-Group Process

# LISTENING

The purpose of this exercise is to help us to learn how to listen more effectively. When we truly “listen” to someone they feel heard and we have the opportunity to connect with them more deeply.

**Exercises:** Have everyone pair up into groups of two (# 1 and # 2).

1. Have the 1s close their eyes and think of something important to them. A concern, a desire, something genuinely significant to them. Instruct the 2s that they are to interrupt, give advice, start telling their own story, give judgments, etc., once the 1s begin sharing what is on their hearts. Have them begin. Let this go on for approximately 1 minute.
2. Now, switch and have the 2s close their eyes and think of something important to them. Repeat the exercise with the 1s interrupting, giving advice, judging, while the 2s are sharing. Go for 1 minute.
3. Debrief the experience. Ask questions like: “What was it like to be sharing your heart and to have a person interrupt with advice, story, judgments?” “When you were doing the interrupting what was going on for you?” Have the men or women look at the feelings they were experiencing during the exercise. Anger at not being heard, feeling disconnected because they are not being heard, or is not really listening, Sadness, and so on.
4. Now, have them stay in the same pair and change the dynamic. This time have the 1s begin sharing what was on their heart originally with the 2s simply listening, making eye contact. Let this go on for 1 minute. Then, switch and have the 2s share with the 1s listening.

5. Debrief the experience. “What was that like?” “How was that different?” “What kind of connection was being made?”

They will most likely have felt heard, cared for, connected.

**Teaching:** When we choose to truly listen we create opportunity for genuine connection. We allow the person talking to speak from the heart. We choose to listen from the heart, without judgments, correction, advice. We choose to connect with the deeper message and the emotions connected to it. Oftentimes, we don't like what the person is saying. We feel attacked, judged, rejected. In truth, even if that is what is going on, through genuine listening we can make the choice to see through the surface words to what the one sharing is truly wanting. Remember, there is holy desire beneath even the most false way of communicating. Are you willing to risk connecting to that desire?

Genuine listening is rooted in love. When we are secure in love, we do not need to insure that others understand us. We can actually be present for others. We are able to see through someone's shields and swords to their wounds and brokenness. We then can choose to connect with the longing for love that is present in their brokenness, offering love and kindness from a secure heart.

(The basis of this material comes from a process developed by Mankind Project on listening.)