Taking Relationships to a Deeper Level â?? 2nd of 7 Tâ??s

Description

Relationships â?? the quality of our life is tied to this one word! Hereâ??s the 2nd of 7 Tâ??s in taking our relationships to a deeper level â?? a heart level. If you missed the first article, you can find it in the last Examiner Note: I wrote these thoughts prior to the pandemic â?¦ during this â??new normâ?•, Iâ??d love your feedback on how these points could be enhanced while â??Social Distancingâ?•: THooper@WFGNationalTitle.com

Total Listening

Think back to a time you were sharing some big news, or an important thought only to realize the person you were talking to wasnâ??t REALLY listening. The reality is, at some point, weâ??ve all probably been that person who was halfway listening. It happens â?? especially these days in our fast-paced, tech-filled lives. Think back to when you were a kid. Was there a parent or grandparent, or maybe a teacher or mentor who really listened to you â?? deeply; intently? Not hurrying you along, or telling you to get to the point; but instead, asking follow-up questions and really getting you to open up. Remember how that made you feel? Remember how it allowed you to articulate a complete thought and actually helped you feel more confident about yourself?

VLTA Examiner

Many times, and especially today, our kids, our friends, and our colleagues are competing with our technology â?? a seemingly constant plug-in. One eye and ear on them and the other eye and ear on our iPhone, Smartwatch, computer screen, or cluttered desk analyzing what needs done when they leave. This competition is ongoing. Kids often act â?? good or bad â?? to simply see if their parents are watching according to Dr. Meg Meeker. They want to be noticed; they LONG to be listened to. When we halfway listen to anyone, itâ??s an emotional hurt â?? often, very small. Overtime, we build up some level of immunity to this â?? a callous of sorts. Halfway listening hurts the most when kids are little; then, we grow up learning to do and accept the same â?? this habit of poor listening detracts from building strong relationships and encourages shallow connection.

When I travel, I love to run through the historic districts. Inevitably, the vivid colors and paintings on bridges, old buildings and train-cars catch my eye. I used to get upset when I saw graffiti. Such a distraction to what was once a pretty structure â?? well, maybe an improvement to the rusty train cars. â??Vandalsâ?• and â??gangstersâ?• are the labels we give these destructive expressionists! But, have we stopped to ponder the lesson in graffiti? Since working with inner-city kids and having kids of my own, I realize that too often Iâ??m the one to blame.

When I was publishing my book, I arrived home late one afternoon to put some things together to get back to Nashville early the next morning. Nikki, who was 7 at the time, greeted me at the door with a huge hug and said, â??Daddy, I drew this story, wanna hear it?â?• My quick response was, â??Sweetheart, give me a second.â?• I was drifting off to sleep late that night when I bolted awake with this gut-wrenching feeling â?? Iâ??d forgotten. Redemption happened early the next morning as we read her 3-page storybook. In my quest to publish my couple hundred pages that would â??change the

worldâ?•, I almost missed the very real opportunity to change her world by reading her 3 pages.

Listening is caring. Listening is powerful! Weâ??ve heard the saying that weâ??re given two ears and one mouth for a reason. The question I have to ask Tim at the end of every day is this, â??Did I listen twice as much and twice as energetically as I talked?â?• I love how John Maxwell says, â??Immature leaders lead first, then listen afterward.â?• Take it from someone who enjoys speaking, the most powerful words are not our own, but the ones we help others say by our availability and presence in listening to them. A Readerâ??s Digest article once shared, â??many people call a doctor when all they want is an audience.â?• Studying patients and doctors, interpersonal communication experts state that just the feeling of being rushed versus the feeling of **being heard** holds a huge contrast in a patientâ??s level of satisfaction. How many lawsuits, strikes, riots, or even the quiet exit of one of our employees started simply from the root of not feeling heard?

In his book, *The 5 Love Languages*, Gary Chapman paints the picture of quality conversation shared with your spouse like this, â??focusing on them, drawing them out, and listening sympathetically to what they have to say. Asking questions, not in a badgering manner but with genuine desire to understand their thoughts, feelings and desires.â?• We can exercise our minds to think in terms of their outcomes. Create value for your spouse, kids, and colleagues by giving them a safe environment of deep and total listening! The psychologist, Carl Rogers, wrote in his book, *On Becoming a Person*, â??When someone expresses some feeling, attitude or belief, our tendency is almost immediately to feel â??thatâ??s right,â?? or â??thatâ??s stupid,â?? â??thatâ??s abnormal,â?? â??thatâ??s unreasonable,â?? â??thatâ??s incorrect,â?? â??thatâ??s not nice,â?? and so on â?¦ rarely do we permit ourselves to understand precisely what the meaning of the statement is to the other person.â?• Seek to understand. Listen, not as much to the words being said, but rather to the pain being expressed. Listen from the other personâ??s point of view! Empathize with them. Put yourself in their shoes. A wise business coach of mine, Mark LeBlanc, told me once that heâ??s part of the â??Listenerâ??s Association.â?• I chuckled and thought he was joking until I looked them up and joined myself.

Maybe weâ??ve allowed life to get too busy. Perhaps itâ??s a good time to take inventory, declutter, and simplify so we can focus on what really matters â?? relationships. We all have the ability to envision what weâ??d like our relationships to look like. Stephen Covey said, â??Begin with the end in mind.â?• What does that look like for us? Imagine scooping up a loved one to do NOTHING but listen. Imagine the difference in these â??vandalsâ?• and â??gangstersâ?• should someone in their pasts have taken the time to listen. So, how would people in our lives be impacted for the better if we showed up to really listen â?? no agenda. Being genuinely curious. What would have to change in our lives in order for this to happen? How can we begin the exercise of creating availability â?? head-space and heart-space â?? to engage in this deeper-level relational gift?



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Date Created
2020/08/27
Author
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