

Speaker and Listener Exercise (story pair practice)

The purpose of this practice is to help deepen and expand the experience that comes out of our time in conversations about race and our sense of compassionately connecting with other persons' experiences.

In this kind of listening, we are not waiting for a chance to speak, or hoping for an opening to deliver some morsel of wisdom. Rather, we are attending to what is happening with us in the moment of listening to our experience or another's.

At the most basic level, this process simply involves receiving what we and others say with gracious, open acceptance, so that we might reflect it back without the weight of our own agendas. In this way, the listener becomes a safe receptacle for hearing experiences into greater life.

For this exercise you will need to find a partner. Within each pair one person will have the role of the listener and the other will be the speaker. The speaker will have about 5 minutes to share.

1. Task of the speaker
 - a. Share your story, recalling when you first remember coming to some awareness about race.
 - b. Remember to speak slowly to allow the listener full opportunity to hear.
 - c. When journaling, ask yourself these questions - what did you notice within yourself as you told the story? What did you notice about the listener as you told your story? (i.e. body language, presence, eye contact, energy)

2. Task of the listener
 - a. Listen to the speaker's story.
 - b. Pay attention to what you notice about the speaker and their experience of sharing a story.
 - c. Notice and set aside any judgments you might have or any desire that arises within you to "fix" the speaker.
 - d. Pay attention to what you notice within yourself in response to the speaker's story.
 - e. If while you are listening to your partner you begin to recall a similar experience of your own - call yourself back to the present moment.
 - f. When journaling, (1) write down what you noticed about what you heard the speaker say, and on another section of the paper, (2) write down what you noticed within yourself as they were sharing their story.

When finished, we want to invite both the listener and speaker to spend about 3 minutes or so in quiet and jot down your answers to the prompts (1c and 2f), and then switch roles.