

LEVELS OF LISTENING & SELF DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE

AND POLAR BEARS AND PENGUINS

A good listener is able to move swiftly and consciously between the different levels of listening depending on the situation. The key is awareness of which level you are in, and which level you need to be in to have your desired impact.

Level 1—'Internal Listening'

Listening is necessary in order to make a decision or to make a judgement call. Then it's perfectly fine to allow yourself to be informed by Level 1. e.g.: Ordering from a menu or choosing the seat to sit in on an aeroplane.

Level 2—'Listening to Understand'

Is necessary when you need to ensure that you are both understood and that you understand the other person. Being able to identify the other person's underlying emotions is an important leadership skill. Respected leaders are good at listening at Level 2.

Level 3—'Global Listening'

Listening is particularly important when you work in a group setting or when you are leading people. Having a sense of what the mood is in your environment will allow you the opportunity to shift it if necessary.

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Exercise—Level 1

The objective of this exercise is to listen completely at level 1, focusing entirely on your own thoughts and opinions. Do this exercise with a family member (or partner). Ask them to describe their ideal next holiday destination, including example of things to do, see, experience and places to go while on holiday. As your family member tells the story, your job is to listen to the words and interpret the story entirely from your own wants and desires (perspective). Make frequent comments in which you offer your opinion. Think about how you would organise the trip differently.

What's going on in your head while the other person is talking/sharing? What does this experience remind you of in your work life? When finished, ask each other what it was like to listen and be listened to at level 1.

Exercise—Level 2

Work with your family member on the same story, and this time be curious. Ask questions, clarify and be alert for your partners' values (what's important) as they express the story. Stay completely focused on your family member by listening and responding with empathy, clarification and collaboration.

When finished tell each other what it is like to listen and be listened to at level 2? How was this experience different from level 1? How can this apply in your organisation? What are you committing to do differently?

Exercise—Level 3

Take some time out to visit various departments in your organisation and be a “fly on the wall” as you visit. Your intention is to identify what the “mood” is in the environment. This takes genuine curiosity and consciousness of your own impact as you enter the room/environment. How do the various departments differ from each other? What did you notice? How does this align to the “mood” with the leadership environment? What are you learning about Level 3? What are you confirming?