You're tuned into a kind of harmony. In this podcast, we're looking to transcend the physical limitations of daily life. In each episode, we speak with a different practitioner who uses sound as a tool or method for connection, transcendence and healing. We're your hosts, Julia E. Dyck and Amanda Harvey.

In this episode, we spoke with Jann tomorrow. Jann is a doctoral candidate at McGill University in counseling psychology, participating in research via the social justice and diversity lab. Her research and clinical interests lie in the socio political factors that influence mental health as well as access to care. In 2016, tomorrow began organizing and curating practice, an experimental sound and meditation series. Practice is an investigation of the capability of sound and listening practices to induce different states of awareness and exploring transformational properties of sound and fostering listening experiences for individuals within a group context is at the heart of practice. This project is undergirded by burgeoning literature on music and listening practices, which demonstrate positive mental health outcomes through relaxation, pleasure, mindfulness and reflexivity. Most importantly, practice is a series that works with musicians and drawers from the unique knowledge that artists hold about sound, listening, and connection. We were curious to speak with Jannnn about her professional and musical practices. In this episode, we discussed the relationship between sound and the nervous system, and their practice of listening. Each of our participants created an original sound piece to accompany their conversation.

Julia

We'll just get started, if you can introduce yourself.

Jann

So my name is Jann. And it's so nice to be speaking with you. I'm really excited about this project and to hear what's collected and what you have to say and what others have to say, for some context. I'm a white settler, I emigrated to Montreal from the States. I'm a PhD student in counseling psychology. And I'm usually doing a few different kinds of work, like practicing psychotherapy, teaching, engaging in research. And then I also was doing the noise meditations for quite a while, which were kind of like an exploration of sound and listening, that was happening communally.

Julia

Perfect. So if you can, first off, describe your professional relationship to listening, how this listening perhaps differs from the way you may listen to music or have a conversation with friends, and then kind of moving forward also how listening can be mediated through your therapy sessions, whether they are online, especially imagined that something that has happened much more often during the pandemic, or in person and how, how this skill of listening this practice of listening has to adapt?

Jann

In therapy, listening.. I would say listening is like my first therapeutic tool. If I'm not listening, I'm really not offering much. And I can't imagine doing anything useful without starting with listening. And I'd say it's also probably my most powerful tool, I think, really to be witnessed and heard. These are pretty essential parts of self development and also relationships. And I think relationships are truly integral to our understandings of ourselves and the world. And a lot of therapy happens through the relationship which really requires listening. For me personally therapeutic listening, I find it really humbling, as well as really expensive, the focus of it, I actually find that to be really settling. So to be fully present without distractions, I find that satisfying, and learning how to listen more attentively, more deeply in therapy that's been really formative. For me personally, I think it's really changed my relationship to myself, and also my relationship to others in a way that's improved those relationships. And I think through listening in therapy, I become a better listener and other areas as well. I don't think I always found it easy. It requires a lot of energy and a lot of focus. You Some people talk about how hearing, it's one of the senses, you can't really turn off, I can shut my eyes and stop my vision, but I can't shut my ears. But how we tune into sound like that's our valve. So if I'm really present to what I'm listening to, I hear a lot more than if I block it out. And I think that's kind of required in therapy to be really paying attention and listening and like, keeping track of each thing that's being said. Whereas like, you know, if I'm reading a book, I might block out my surroundings and not hear that so much.

So that intention to hear and to really listen. And to be fully receptive. I think that's so important and therapeutic listening. And it's really like a presence that I'm trying to bring. And that, like, you know, protectively, that's something we can also turn off, I wouldn't in therapy, but like it for the difference, like in life, you can bring your presence to what you're listening to, and turn it off. And that's like a useful thing that we have, if I'm thinking about, like, what is important about how I'm listening in therapy, I think there's like a context in therapy, you know, there's like explicit and renewed consent about what we're doing. Everybody there knows that I'm listening, and that I'm doing that in pursuit of facilitating the well being of the client or clients. So that's like, agreed upon by entering into therapy, and then like, re agreed upon through different parts of the relationship. And then I think listening can be really different in therapy than in other relationships, in the way that I listened to myself. So like, I've used myself as a tool in therapy, I have to that's like what I have. But yeah, the way that I listen to myself and my reactions to stuff that comes up for me, it's like all in pursuit of the client, or like in service of the client. So I would never, like I'm not going to like explore for my own purposes, I would have to kind of shelve that and wait until after therapy, if something interesting came up. My experiences can be used as a therapeutic tool, and if not useful, wait. So I think that the way I listened to myself, is a big difference in the therapeutic context. And then also, just like the act of listening, it's a very, I don't want to say goal oriented, but like, it's very focused listening that's dedicated to, and working with the clients needs, goals and intentions in therapy, it's listening for the client's well being, and like within the client system and values. And I think that's quite different than in the rest of my life, where I'm like, more centered in my own values, rather than like coming from my values, but going into someone else's. And maybe this like, active listening and therapy could be kind of like analogous to like how a sound engineer might listen, if they were like mixing a piece. You know, it's like really, like you're getting in there, the nitty gritty, you're super focused. That's like, that's the only thing you're doing. And that's quite different than how you would listen to a record to just like enjoy some music, and you're not going to enjoy it when you're like in there at that level. So yeah, I think in therapy, it's a bit more detailed, a bit more nuanced,

and I think it would probably be invasive, or like wrong to listen like that in an everyday situation. It would just require too much effort to do that all the time. And listening like that, like it really does put a hold on other ways of being, other ways of listening other ways of engaging with yourself and with other people. My own desires are less present in therapy, thinking about virtual versus being in person.

I think one of the interesting things about working virtually is that you're sharing two distinct environments. So you have two different soundscapes. And that means the I have less control over what the other soundscape is, and the other person, if it's like a dyad therapy, they have less control over my soundscape too. And we really have to trust that our spaces are confidential. And there can be a bunch of different kinds of disruptions, you know, like someone knocking on my door, or like someone else in someone else's house coming by, or like making noise or whatever. And there are technical disruptions as well. I mean, I think that that has this weird extra level of Yeah, you know, you're like, Oh, we got disconnected. And that can just, like, have such deep feelings to it. Because the thing that you're trying to do is connect and therapy. And then for no one's fault, like the Wi Fi drops, or whatever, and you can't hear and you have to ask people to repeat, and you have to make decisions around that to like, like, kinda know what you said. But I missed two words, because it was choppy. And like, Do I make you repeat that sentence? That was hard enough to say the first time? Or do I go with it? Do I have enough info that like, I think we can proceed? I think there's all kinds of weird scenarios to think through and work through and make decisions about when you're working virtually, that are really different. And when you're working in person, I don't really love listening super digitally, especially to people in conversation. I don't think voices sound as good online as they do in person, it's something that I found to be kind of nice, and that is that I can like, turn people off or turn people down their volumes. So if someone was really quiet, instead of like, really like straining my ears, or like leaning forward, which I would often do even in session, I can just turn people up and like, stay comfortable. And if someone's really loud, and it's like in my earbuds, I can turn them down a bit. And then also like, I can stay more comfortable and be better at doing my job. I think in person, you're sharing a sound environment. And I think that is much more connected, more intimate. It is a good different level of connectivity. And I think I mean, like obviously, you're like sharing these vibrations, and you're sharing all the noises. So like, if there's like a bird out side, the window like you both hear it, you both notice it. And that's different than if you're in two different spaces, because it's virtual. I remember I like live across the street from school. And there's kids who play outside quite a bit. And they're really loud. And I remember one of my clients being like, Are they okay? And it just, you know, it's like, during all this different information into the session that wouldn't really be there be on our minds or be disrupting us if we're in the same room. And we'd be like sharing the experience differently, had an office downtown and sometimes like, I don't know, those like bikes with a bunch of people who are drinking on them would go by, and it'd be like, Oh, we're both here in this we're both experiencing this. And it's less of like my worlds coming into your therapy session and disrupting you. And I think in person there's, there's more like body sounds, if you will, like I'm a client can maybe hear my humanity a bit more, my stomach can rumble.

And I can notice a client's physicality or like a physical soundscape so much more in person. So I think in person allows me to be much more attuned to a person or maybe even like sonically attune to a person

Julia

You're speaking about this - kind of using yourself as a tool and also listening to yourself and this presence, and also like this ability to not turn off the ears, but turn off this sense of listening. So I wonder if you have any way to prepare yourself for this kind of intense listening, or if there's anything that you do kind of afterwards to break this space to differentiate between your real life and then yeah, as you said, you're busy with this generosity of self. That takes a lot of energy, I would imagine.

Jann

I think it does take a lot of energy and is like a learning curve. In the beginning. I think it took more energy than it did now. And I think with years of practice, it will take even less energy as I become more accustomed to it. But I definitely changed a lot about my life, to be able to show up really fully resourced for a therapy session. And I think my own self care improved because I knew I had to like be there and be so attentive in a way that I like might not showing up for shift as like a barista or in the way that you know, I met, like, go to class and not have 100% energy, be like, a bit tired. And we'll go to class and that's okay. But for a therapy session like I really want to be, in my best way possible. And so I think I became much better at regulating how much sleep I had, taking really good care of myself exercising regularly, like really managing myself, I got into the different kinds of meditation and mindful practices before I began therapy. And I was grateful for that. And those practices have supported me quite a bit. And being able to develop and facilitate having like a grounded center that I could come to and access more and more easily, the more I practice, and just like practicing that receptivity, having attention, having focus, I learned a lot of that through mindfulness. I mean, sometimes I'm quite drained post session. So I'm always a bit blurry to like schedule things at the end of the day, while you're in school, you don't always have a clinical day. And then a research day is like a pretty big mix. But I would try to separate things so that I could stay in a similar state. And I would find myself tired at the end of the day, and not having a ton of social energy. So yeah, sometimes I would just like need a bit of space to kind of, I don't know what I was doing something, I had some sort of internal process that was happening, where I was, like, coming back into me, and then getting back into a place where I could like, interact with others. And for me, like I would often go on a walk or bike ride, like something that had a bit of movement to it was pretty so low, and didn't really require a lot of brain energy from me, but I wouldn't do aerobics. And I don't know if that's just because I was like sitting, you know, you sit in therapy. And it's maybe just too intense to go from sitting to, like, working out. I don't know what it was, I just didn't really have the energy for that.

Working with different people has actually helped me know myself more, more centered, and have more access to myself, while also having more space for others who are doing things differently. And just like having that be more okay, certainly I don't think it feels like that for humans all the time to just feel like I'm me, and you're doing something different. And that's totally okay. I think something else that supports my work and helps me listen and have more space for listening is using supervision. So if things come up for me during a session, and I think that they're going to get in the way of the work, I take that to supervision and I work it out with a supervisor. Like I say it, I name it, I express it, I like figure out like, is there something useful about my reaction? Or like, is that just my Yeah, I think that is a really essential part of practicing. And you're offered a lot of supervision at the beginning, when you're

training, like, you have to be in supervision. But for me, I find it so generative, that it's I can't imagine practicing without supervision, without having a place where I can go and talk through what comes up for me how I'm understanding the work what I think is important. And I think that really helps kind of separate what's mine, what's the client's and make me like more and more available for people?

Julia

Cool, I would have never thought about a therapist having somebody else to kind of talk to. But of course, it makes perfect sense. So you can't just take on everything and then have nowhere for yourself to talk about whatever comes up for you.

Jann

I think it's so important. And I try to be really transparent in my practice. Like, I'll tell clients, I have a supervisor, this is who it is, do you know that person? Do you have any, like, overlap in your life with that person? If they do, I wouldn't talk to that supervisor about that person. So it's a really important discussion, the very personal process, I think is important.

Julia

Okay, so aside from your more clinical practice, you also host a sound meditation series called practice. So I wonder what is sound meditation? How do you practice it? And what inspired you to take on this initiative and start hosting?

Jann

I started practice in 2016. And I started out with Mikhail Tobias, who is a very good friend, musician and producer, who's quite excellent. And he now lives in Copenhagen. Okay, I can't remember exactly what prompted us in the beginning, but I remember it was like, at the beginning of my graduate studies, I was working and studying stressful time, and at the end of my long days, I would often go to Mikhail's and we would listen we'd listen to music. or whatever he had worked on that day. And I really enjoyed the experience. And we were talking about listening a lot kind of comparing how I was listening to how he listens. And Mikhail has like, very good hearing. And I think he was able to start to point out different things I could listen to. And through him being like, okay, like, do you hear that, I started to be able to hear better in the world of music or sound. Through these experiences, I was starting to gain depth and focus in my listening. And I found the act of listening, very calming, I found it really engaging, like it was low stress, but required attention. And I think, honestly, it was just kind of parallel to a practice of mindfulness, but maybe slightly more interesting and more accessible. Like, if I was distressed, I'd be pretty unlikely to engage in mindfulness. But listening was a really easy way in for me. Like, just as an aside, I think that's useful to think through mindfulness can be truly difficult for people, especially if

someone has trauma, then traumatic experiences might be quite haunting if you're trying to meditate in silence. And so having that noise that sounds something to listen to, can be really helpful for someone to engage in mindfulness. The more I got out of listening, the richer the experience, and I would start to feel a bit different than myself. And I found I wanted like to listen to less and less like, rather than listen to a whole song, I wanted to like pare things down. And then when there was less, I was starting to find the listening experience to be kind of like richer, like, I could really focus on what was there without having to keep track of a bunch of different things at once. And I was like, Oh, this is like, fascinating. And so I don't know, we were enjoying listening together. And we thought it would be really interesting to be listening with others. And we wanted to kind of engage in more dedicated listening practices. And we were interested in creating new spaces for listening, we really wanted to get away of the idea of like, going out at night and seeing a show and kind of like, having this big sensory overload. We're like, oh, what would it be like to be listening, maybe like mid day, when someone still has the energy to be focusing, we tried to make it so people could like sit or lie down. So that really the only thing we were doing was listening, we were hoping it would be a really connected experience. So something where it's, you know, you're really like, trying to be present and open going inward. It's kind of vulnerable, but you're doing it with 30 people at once. And I don't know that we knew exactly what we wanted to get out of it. In the beginning, we were just enjoying listening, and talking about listening and thought it could be interesting to bring some more people into this. And we wanted to see what it was like if artists had the chance to create a different kind of piece. So less of a musical performance, but more to create something that they would expect an audience to be really deep listening to, and to be thinking through Oh, like what kind of an impact could I have on people who are truly attentive and truly receptive.

We suspected that musicians or sound artists would have pretty unique and creative ideas about the transformative power of sound. And we were just like, curious about what that could be, what could be created. And we've read some research, like kind of early research that suggests that sound can impact our states of being or our states of consciousness, or even like some people talk about it in terms of like, impacting the nervous system. And so we thought this could be really interesting to explore as well. And like, it's easy to notice in ourselves. The way like a really noisy light can just kind of like irritate you over a day, or how some noise can help bring you into a really calm or centered place. Or music could be like energizing or provoking anxiety. And so we were like, okay, like something's here, it'd be worth exploring. And so that's kind of how we created the noise meditation. We didn't put a lot of like protocol or rules on it. We're really just like, come and listen. And like we can talk about what your experience was like and we just let it kind of evolve over the sessions.

Julia

Amazing. And anything you noticed about the people that came to the session, any reactions? What did the experience bring?

Jann

We had a lot of positive feedback, people saying they really appreciated that they liked coming some like repeat offenders, people who would come each time I And I think, for us, like the connectivity between people is the thing that we ended up liking the most, the way it felt to be experiencing it together in a group listening together, maybe chatting about it afterwards. But just the whole event, some of the noise meditations, I thought were like doing really interesting things like, one of the artists was like using this space as a speaker. And so had like these devices to like, turn the walls and the railings into speakers. And so it was like really working with that physicality of sound, the materialism of sound, and like some people would like place many different speakers. So like really highlighting how we're each having a unique experience and making it like so tailored, like if you sit here next to the speaker, we're getting into this idea of like, Oh, we're all here, like, experiencing vibrations together, and we're changing those vibrations. And like getting into that other layer of connectivity, I think, through exploring sound, we were kind of just getting into like non cochlear sound, there were some folks who were starting to come to the noise meditations, who like were either very low hearing or couldn't hear, and were interested in participating. And we're really excited about that. And then the pandemic hit.

I went and visited this cool space in Montreal that was finished being built like two days before lockdown. And it was a flexible floor with 12 speakers underneath. So you could lie down on the floor and experience vibrations of sound, you would hear them and also physically feel them. And we were going to start designing noise meditations for that. But then the pandemic happened. I want to add one other thing is that since I was gone for a little bit during the pandemic, and since I've come back to Montreal, I feel like there's a lot of different sound meditations happening that are like, very cool and happening in a bunch of different directions. And I don't know if they were always here, but I didn't know about them until I started doing something and then you can start to see who else is doing that. Or if they have been popping up since. But I'm just aware that there are many people who are wanting to engage in deeper listening and to experience some of the benefits of sound healing. And there's so many cool sound practitioners in Montreal, like I think we're in a really good way for that if people want to be engaging with sound healing, and like one of our Montreal therapists just wrote a whole book about sound healing and does lots of different kinds of sound therapies and sound books and sound groups. Gets like something that's growing. But I don't know, because I've just yet started working with it. And like the last five years.

Julia

Amazing. Yeah, I totally feel that like, you know, a few months into the pandemic. I was like, man, I can't wait to go to the rave. But then when do you actually come out of it, you're like, this is way too overwhelming. I really just want this focus or this different experience that feels healing and connecting in this way that I didn't think that I actually wanted. So that actually doesn't surprise me. Which actually leads me kind of into my next question then, about the relationship between sound and the nervous system.

Jann

I love your questions. I think this is a really complex question. And maybe there are like specialists, maybe neurobiologists who are specialized in sound that would have a better take. We know that our nervous systems impact how we hear truly on a physiological level, like we know the sympathetic nervous system is going to regulate cochlea, blood flow and it can modulate cochlear fibers. It can affect the hair cells in our ears, like all that kind of stuff. The parasympathetic and central nervous system, they impact our auditory system, and how we perceive sound, which is fascinating, but also as humans on a day to day level, I think we can talk about how we understand how sound is impacting us, for me, like I think we all have really personal and unique nervous systems. And our nervous systems are changing in accordance to our environments, our experiences, moment to moment and also throughout life. And I think listening is a pretty direct line to the nervous system. And our perception of sound can really range and so we can perceive sound if it's violent and destructive, but it also can be calming and centering. And it can be energizing, or euphoric, we can really have a range like you and I could listen to this exact same sound and have really different experiences. And you can probably even notice within yourself, even with your comment about wanting to go to raves, sometimes, but not at other times, we can listen to the same sound and feel really different about it. And so I think the state we're in, changes our receptivity to sound changes, how we perceive sound, how we take it in, and like what we ended up doing with sound. Yeah, and sometimes I think that it depends on your past experiences, like I've had a lot of very positive experiences listening to sound. And I think that's why it's really compelling and rewarding for me to listen. And then I think other people just don't really get the same thrill or satisfaction from listening. You know, like, maybe they've just had different experiences, or they have like other senses that are so much stronger for them or something. So I think it is like truly personal, I often really pull from the idea of the window of tolerance. When I think about sound and listening, we can inhabit a state the window of tolerance that's kind of like this optimal state of arousal for doing everyday life functioning, like a really calm and centered place where you're not stressed that you're not sleepy, you're kind of like, just perfectly alert, connected to others able to access creativity. Yeah, really grounded center. And I think from here, you can be really receptive to listening. And then like at the polar ends, you would have hyper arousal and hypo arousal, hyper arousal would be kind of like that flight or fright state, where you might be like anxious or threatened or distressed. From there, it's actually like really hard to be relational with others, usually have like, pretty narrow, focused thinking, that's like, looking for what could go wrong, what kind of problems could happen. And then on the other end, hypo arousal, kind of like a shutdown. This is the freeze state, where you're like, not very receptive to anything like inward shut down turned off, I think listening in these different states is really different. And sometimes the act of listening can like bring you into that optimal state. And then also, I think listening can like, bring you into a hyper arousal state or hypo arousal state, depending on what you're listening to. So if there's like, some sort of sound that's really terrible or irritating to you, it could kind of like stress you and then agitate you and distress you eventually, I think if people want to try to get into that like centered middle window of tolerance, I would suggest maybe going for a music that is like soothing to you or a sound. For me, it's usually something quite minimal. I think what's happening often for people is that it gives you a way to come into the present moment, you're using your sense of hearing to be listening. So you're getting out of your thoughts and your thoughts are maybe like taking you into the future, taking you into the past, you can't necessarily do that fully, while also fully listening, be less than your head and like more in the present moment. And you can be using that sense of

hearing to connect to the hearing now. And that can like cause a chain reaction within your body to get into a calmer state. So maybe as you're listening, your heart can go a little slower, your breath can get a bit deeper, a little bit slower, your muscles can relax, your whole body can get on board to get into a calmer state, we really need those kinds of states. It's an important place to be. And it really changes how we interact with the world. So I think it's a useful experience. Like we experienced sound and non cochlear ways you can really feel the sob or the low end vibrating, like in a physical way. I think we are quite impacted by the physicality of sound. And that will impact our nervous system as well in different ways. Like I'm talking about individual nervous systems, but I think there's a lot to be said about collective nervous systems or collective sound environments. You know, if we think about like, protests in Montreal, such a favorite activity, it's like a loud event and we use that noise to get everybody together and on board and engaging in this shared experience. And then you know, people talk a lot about going to raves or other big ritual events with music and dancing, that can really create an energetic connection between people. And sound is like hugely contributing to that both in a way that we hear and experience physically. So I think that our nervous systems are in that like, getting into it and like sharing with each other in the same way that it can be really great, it also can be really terrible, like can be really irritating, and there can be very violent soundscapes.

Julia

Thank you. Another kind of big one, if you can touch on affect theory, what it is and how it could relate to sound, music and listening in quite a broad sense.

I think Montreal is a place where people often talk about effect theory, because Brian Massumi is here and he's an effect theorist. My understanding is that people use an effect theory in pretty different ways. And I think that that's because it's kind of like an in between and messy concept, which is, why I love it, and also why I might fail at explaining it. But some people talk about affect theory as the capacity to affect and be affected. That's like kind of how Brian Massumi puts it. And so this is interesting, because it kind of is talking about what's happening outside of a person or like between people or just between, like, it doesn't have to be people, but it also involves one's interiority, people often work with ethics theory via emotions. And you can say that, like affect is intimate with emotions, yet distinct. But I think there's like lots of other ways that we can apply the idea of affecting and being affected. There was a psychologist, Sylvan Tompkins, who used effect theory to kind of categorize nine primary effects and the way that these effects will motivate people, and especially like the way that effect was expressed outwardly to people. And like in this work, it was like a lot about facial expressions like showing anger or happiness or the way that effect is then conveyed between Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, among others was like using effect theory within clear theory. But then there's like another tract started with Spinoza and went through like Deleuze and Guattari. And then came to Massumi, which explores effect theory kind of like in other forms, definitely not so much in emotions, but more this idea of affecting and being affected, or focus on like, how that happens, looking in between, okay, and some people consider sound to be the really like exemplar of effect theory, because of the like materialism of sound waves, and vibrations. So sound is like going around affecting humans, but it also exists in access of humans, that goes beyond human perception. And what I love is that it really dissenters humans, and opens up

the richness of other layers of happenings. Yeah, so like, of course, soundwaves, you know, they're going around, and they're being affected by humans by like, you know, our bodies, and the structures we build and all that, but like, also, then they're continuing to travel affected and affecting. Yeah, just considering the materialism of sound really changes my focus on what's being created, how I can think about that, and how I can interpret what's happening. I love that I can just so easily then go beyond the human. I think what's special about effect theory is it points to how everything is connected. Nothing's really distinct. And it's like really getting at like the relationality between. Yeah, I think that helps us realize what kinds of relations vibrations attunements are amplified or salient. And then also, like, which ones are getting ignored or devalued? I think there's something really useful in examining reverberations.

Julia

Super, no, I love that. It's quite clear. And beautiful, honestly. Okay, so as you mentioned, in your occupation, your career listening is kind of one of the most important tools that you have. And obviously, you are quite a trained and experienced listener. So how do you think, or do you have some ideas about how we, as citizens who are not therapists, could become better listeners in our lives in our relationships?

Jann

I think context like paying attention to the context of listening is important. So what's your motivation for listening or what's the motivation of being heard? The intention around the interaction I think is really important. I think if you want to truly listen, just One, you need to shelve your own narrative, your ideas, your interpretations, your reactions, maybe even some of your values, all of that stuff, like, at least for a minute, to really hear what the other person is saying, in therapy, we call this bracketing. And I'm not sure it's fully possible to be bracketing, but I think actually, the attempt is really important. Because once you kind of quiet all of your own stuff, I think the idea is that you have more space, to hear what the other person is trying to say, and more availability, to be receptive to that other person, to their agenda, their intention, their perspective. I think listening within someone else's system is important to be able to hear within that person's set of values within their wants and their needs, rather than just understanding your own lens. It's certainly not easy. And like, you know, in therapy, and I think in life, we're really taught to pull on empathy, to listen and to be with others, right. But like, empathy is complicated, because empathy is saying, like, I get what you're saying, because I've experienced the same thing. But that's just not true in a lot of experiences. Like when you're working with something, or someone's telling you about something that you haven't experienced, you can't really empathize with that. And I think there's something there like a limit of empathy that requires us to just trust what someone else is saying, and to like, be in that other person's world and not in your own.

Julia

Wow, I think that is such useful advice. And I wish that everyone can hear that because it's true, so hard. That's going to inform the way that I listen in the future, for sure, I will keep the brackets in mind. I wonder like, just, if you can also touch a little bit on I mean, you mentioned what it means to be a good listener, which is the practice of the bracketing and not actually leaning so much into empathy, which is, I think, like, so counterintuitive for so many people. But also, what do you think it generates to be truly listened to? Like, what is this gift of being listened to? How can it affect people? And do you believe this is a feminist, or queer or political practice?

Jann

I think to be listened to, is to like, have someone fully attend to what you're saying, and take it in and trust your experience and believe what you're saying, there's like a lot of different ways that you can listen to someone and engage in listening to that person. So to be like a tune to someone else. It's not necessarily just what they're saying, but maybe how they're saying it a bunch of other factors, what they're doing, knowing their context, how we tune to someone else, I think is really important. I think we usually do that like based on our own, you know, our fears, our joys, what's important to us, but learning what's salient to the other person and attuning to that, I think it's a way to, like really see another person through their worlds, and listen to what they're fully saying. And I think that can be like a really transformative process. Because when we're really putting our narratives on top of someone else, we can be like chipping away at their selves, discrediting what they have to say, trying to like rearrange it, or like indicate like, Ooh, it should be different than it is. But really listening to someone and sticking with their experience, it's kind of a way of saying like, Oh, it's valid as it is like, let's follow this. Let's see what's there. I think that's a way to really help someone develop who they are. And like bigger or more collective layers, it can get says something about how we value diversity and like allowing people to do things in different ways. I think it's complicated, right? Like, if we're listening, and attuning it's a process and requires a bit of a like a digestion or reception of what was said and then like offering something back. And so like, maybe this is the tricky or the interesting part, like, how can you offer something but like stay in the parameter of the other person continuing to engage authentically as yourself but also like, not trying to shape someone else too much. I think it's like truly complicated, but like, how much can you get into someone else's world? And then within that world, like what can you offer? Thinking from an intersectional feminist perspective or a political perspective or queer perspective? I think it's worth mentioning that listening is really tasking. It's a really dedicated form of labor and It's often one that's like assigned to women and more often racialized women. And it's also really heavily devalued in society. So even though I see listening as an honor and a privilege, and like, it can totally be a gift, it's not recognized as such widely. And listening and so many forms is really not conceptual or reciprocal. So I think like that context of listening is really important. And my relationships and my work, I am not forced into listening, I choose it. And it comes with boundaries. Like I think listening can be a tool of liberation, but it can also be used violently if someone's forced to listen, or mediate, or take care, which like often happens, and then I think, like, who gets listened to is important. Listening has really been withheld from so many communities, mostly marginalized communities. So if someone's marginalized, it's very likely they haven't been heard, marginalized experiences are often erased, ignored,

discredited. And so to listen and validate and believe, and really get into an experience or a world, I think that's a deeply political, and like really the first step towards any sort of social change that would make conditions like more equitable or more inclusive or viable for people. And I think it's a necessary act if we want to be allowing for the diversity in the way that we live and in who lives and and who gets access to power and resources and that kind of stuff.

Julia

Totally, yeah, that 's very powerful. Okay, last question. It's a bit of an abstract one, but through sound, what would you say is hidden and what is revealed?

Jann

So maybe sound is like always revealing something, and hiding other things? To answer this question, you really have to look at, like, who's the producer of sound like, how is sound being produced? And like, Are there motivations or intentions there? And then, yeah, who's the listener? What are they listening for? And what's the relationship between those two, you know, like, when we're out in the world, I'm just like, walking around. There's such a rich environment to listen to. But like, I don't choose to listen to that all the time. I'm actually quite passive in my listening. And so a lot is hidden to me. As I'm like, walking down the street, if I'm in my head, thinking a lot, I'm really not listening to my environment. I'm missing like all of this cool stuff. And I think if we're really holding our own narratives back of it, I think there's so much potential for what could be revealed. I think also something that comes to mind for me as a therapist is that the way that we feel can often be revealed through our voices through our sounds, if our voice wobbles, or comes out a bit too loud, it could share some emotional content, I think some voice can be really incredibly revealing a pitch or an accent could give away clues, or could give away some aspect of a person's identity. And then I think we also we can conceal some feelings or thoughts or other narratives, through the use of our voice, and body sounds can reveal as well. You know, like, if a gasp sneaks out or snort or there's like something digestive. I think that that can be really revealing. I know that like some people use music to help their dogs chill out. So if you have like a reactive dog, or a dog that's a little bit stressed, and they're like in that hyper arousal state, where they're like, listening to all the sounds in the distance, and like getting all worked up about it, having some music to kind of like bring their focus just here. It can help them not be trying to listen for anything that can come their way and it can help relax them. And so music can kind of hide what's outside of us or like sound can do that. It's curious to think through like, what we tune into and how and why. What might we know if we could be listening differently or like mapping out different kinds of patterns or trajectories of sound like would that tell us different things about the relationships that are happening in the world around us? Probably.

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