

## READING #07: THE CONTEXTS OF LISTENING AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

In life, it is rare to experience having another truly listen to us. Instead, we talk to each other and listen to the words, or to our opinions about what is being said, or to how things impact or affect us. We speak and exchange ideas and thoughts. We share, sometimes quite intimately, our own experiences and our own feelings. We have been taught that a “good listener” is someone who is with us, attentive to what we are saying. We know that Listening is about being present, about being “with.” Coaching, however, takes listening to a deeper place, a deeper “level” of listening than in day-to-day life.

In coaching, it is not whether we listen or not, it is where we point our attention and it is the impact of our listening. The quality and focus of our listening has the client feel that they are heard and that we are with them, but it also assists us in engaging our curiosity and intuition and forwarding the action, deepening the learning. The three levels of Listening give us a larger range, an increased listening capacity, if you will.

In Level 1 Listening our attention is on us. We listen to the words that are being spoken and pay attention to our thoughts, judgments and opinions about ourselves and others. Level 1 Listening informs us about ourselves. It is the level where we figure it out and understand. In coaching, clients are usually at Level 1, looking at themselves and their lives; processing, thinking about, and understanding themselves and their relationships to the world around them more fully. The impact of this kind of listening narrows the focus down to a looking at self, and all of the feelings, thoughts, judgments, and evaluations therein. So while it is fabulous for the CLIENT to be at Level 1 (all the focus is on the client in coaching) it is not appropriate for the COACH.


With Level 2 Listening there is a very hard focus “over there” on the other person — lots of attention to the other person, but still not much awareness of the world around you. Remember the last time you were around two people who were newly, deeply in love and felt like you were invisible? There was a lot of Level 2 Listening going on there and not much in the way of Level 3. The impact of Level 2 Listening is on the client or person being listened to. You are listening for what will forward the action or deepen the learning for the client. So Level 2 informs you about your client.

Level 3 Listening opens up the hard focus of Level 2 to 360 degrees. It is all about a soft, wide-angle focus on everything: What is going on with you, the client, and the world. At Level 3 we are wide open for our intuition to speak to us in a variety of ways. Level 3 informs us about everything; about what is going on with self, client and world. The impact of Level 3 is like the impact of a pebble in a pond. The ripples spread out and touch different surfaces at different times, each surface in a slightly different way. Mastery of Level 3 is to be aware and attentive to all those impacts at the same time.

Self management is about awareness and choice... for the coach, the ability to be aware of where your attention is and the ability to choose to put your attention over on your client.

The coach is in service to the client, and does not allow personal issues or feelings to interfere with the coaching. The skill of holding the client’s agenda lives in the Context of Self-Management. Self-Management also means letting go of fixing whatever the client has brought to the coaching, and bringing your attention and focus to the person.

One aspect of Self-Management for coaches is to become very aware of and familiar with the voices of your own Saboteur, and learn to separate yourself from your Saboteur; choosing instead to coach from your most powerful self.



How does your Saboteur show up when you're coaching? For many coaches it is the desire to give value, or to ask the right question, or to better understand what the client is saying. Notice how these tendencies show up in you — and notice when you're struggling or working really hard in the coaching relationship. Something is off in those moments, and odds are there's a Saboteur in the space — yours or the client's... or both! Your awareness that something is off allows you to return to Level 2 and Level 3 Listening, and to return your attention and focus to the person you are coaching.

Remember that the coaching is not about the coach, AND you have a job to do. Sometimes you'll manage yourself INTO the coaching, and sometimes you'll manage yourself OUT of the coaching. Consciously choosing when and how to dance in and dance out of the coaching is an expression of Self-Management.