



# Miracles

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*How to Heal Your Body  
and Your World, p. 30*

# TRUE LISTENING LIFTS EVERYONE (AND PREPARES US TO HEAR THE ONLY VOICE THERE IS)

by Allan Ishac

**G**erald Jampolsky, an early student of *A Course in Miracles* and the author of *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, told a wonderful story about serving on the board of a large company.



During a particularly contentious meeting, in which he felt he had little to say, he decided instead to focus on listening intently to everyone in the room, sending love to each person as they spoke.

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**True listening has taken a back seat to being heard.**

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When the meeting was over, the CEO came up to Dr. Jampolsky, put his hands on his shoulders, and thanked him profusely for his valuable contributions, saying that his words had been a calming influence in the room. But Dr. Jampolsky contends that he never opened his mouth.

Attentive listening like this is a gift to others, one with a kind of miraculous power in it. But I think it's rare. In our media-focused environment, where it seems that everyone is trying to grab his or her 15 minutes of attention, true



listening has taken a back seat to being heard. Often by loud, insistent voices.

For a long time, I thought of myself as a good listener. Then I read a quote by American author and humorist Fran Lebowitz: *“The opposite of talking isn’t listening. The opposite of talking is waiting.”* And just like that, I realized I had spent most of my life waiting to get a word in, express my opinion, offer advice. I would regularly interrupt whomever I was speaking with to make my more important point or share my greater wisdom. I hadn’t been listening particularly well at all.

Now I’m learning that when I listen patiently and silently with all of myself—ears, eyes, body, heart—it gives others added confidence. They feel safer to express themselves and become more expansive in doing so. When



people know they are being heard, they take greater risks toward meaningful expression, and all are made richer for it.

The opposite is also true. When people know they are not being listened to, they're not sure if what they're saying is important or valuable. When no one is there to listen to their hopes and dreams, to affirm them in the receptive vessel of silence, those dreams can easily wither and die. Without patient listening, a hopeful heart can become doubtful, deflated, and depressed.

### **Not just hearing, really listening**

Course teacher and psychologist Dr. Kenneth Wapnick spoke often about listening for the “melos,” or melody, in a conversation, rather than just the words being spoken. He pointed out that this is particularly helpful in a therapeutic setting, but it is true anywhere, with anyone.

Dr. Wapnick encouraged listening for the meaning beyond the words by paying attention to hand gestures, pauses, facial expressions, even slips of the tongue. When we're wholeheartedly tuned in, people begin to tell us exactly

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what is happening for them, where their fears, hurts, or deep happiness reside, and what they need from us.

But this requires a genuine commitment to listen with all of ourselves—and to keep quiet—so that we can hear the others' inner music, the essence of what they're telling us. When we do this, we are able to discern a larger truth beneath the audible word, and we never fail to learn more about those whom we're with, always something new and revealing.

By perfecting this “melos listening” skill, we don't have to be good conversationalists to be deeply in conversation, or in a mutually beneficial relationship with others. We just have to become better listeners.

### **Listening creatively, imaginatively**

No one has written more eloquently about the power of listening than the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century columnist, Brenda Ueland, in her essay, *The Art of Listening*.

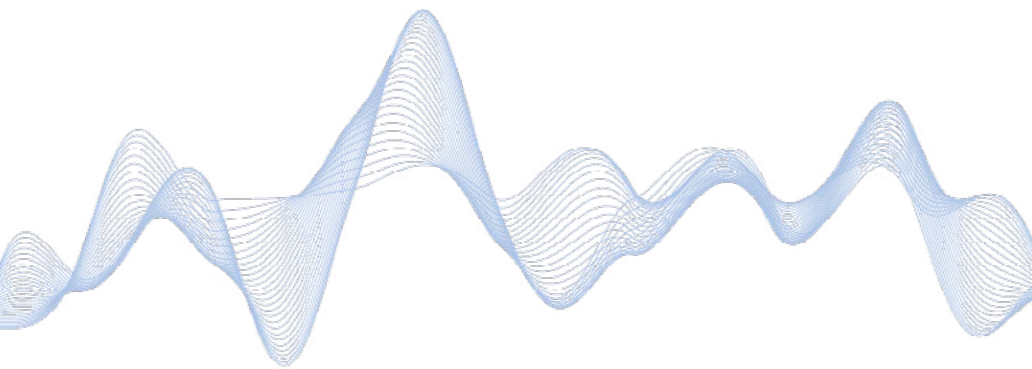
She says that: “. . . listening, not talking, is the gifted and great role, and the imaginative role. And the true listener . . . is more effective and learns more and does more good.”

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**I put my cell phone away now when I'm conversing with anyone.**

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Imaginative listening is a powerful concept, but I know that some of my own past conversation habits have been less than imaginative, taking me out of the present moment and away from the “listenee.”



So I put my cell phone away now when I'm conversing with anyone, aware that its mere appearance on a dining table or even in my hand can affect the quality of the exchange.

I try to make consistent eye contact, too, even when activity around me competes for my attention. And, most importantly, I keep my lips zipped, resisting the temptation to get my two cents in, blurt out affirmatives, or share my own story. All this takes practice, but the results are immediate and profound.

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**Listening without *my* agenda is the true miracle.**

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### **Preparing the inner ear**

Lately I have discovered something else about true listening that is perhaps its most precious gift: strengthening the muscle of deep listening on the physical level prepares my “inner ear” for hearing guidance at a higher level—and leads to a more consistent collaboration with spirit.

ACIM tells us that spirit will not scream over the chaos in our minds, and that its still small voice can be heard only in quiet. Which makes me think that learning to listen well in the illusion of time and space is good practice,



and puts me in the right attitude, to hear the only Voice there is to hear.

Because I am someone who needs a lot of help, asking for guidance has become a vital, minute-by-minute practice. But, too often still, I tend to tell (*yell*) my needs at spirit, demanding the answer that I think is best for me. Listening without *my* agenda, or *my* better way, or insisting that *my* answer is the right one—whether in conversation with friends, family and colleagues, or with spirit—is the true miracle, taking me from hearing in fear to listening in partnership with Love.

The last line of Brenda Ueland’s essay seems to affirm exactly this, that fully committed listening is closely related to miracles, and may even inspire them: “*And so try listening. Listen to . . . your friends . . . to those who love you and those who don’t. It will work a small miracle. And perhaps a great one.*”

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*Allan Ishac is the author of the regional bestsellers, [New York’s 50 Best Places To Find Peace And Quiet](#) and [New York’s 50 Best Places To Take Children](#). He has been studying A Course In Miracles since 1986 and just completed a metaphysical adventure novel, *The First Metanoian*, based on the themes in ACIM. Contact Allan through [allanishac.com](#), where you can also sign up for a first peek at the new book.*

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### **BE LOVE!**

People will forget what you said,  
People will forget what you did, but  
People will never forget how you made them feel. ”

— Maya Angelou

from “Love Says” #351, a thrice-weekly short message. To subscribe, send an email to [mhpress55@gmail.com](mailto:mhpress55@gmail.com) with “subscribe” in the subject line.