

Let's Talk About Us

**A Guide to Deeper Listening
for Better Understanding**



PLEDGE
TO
LISTEN

LISTENING PRACTICE: A #PTL GUIDEBOOK

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**This just in:
We all need to listen
to each other.**

**But you knew
that already.**

This is a guide to help us realize our humanity.

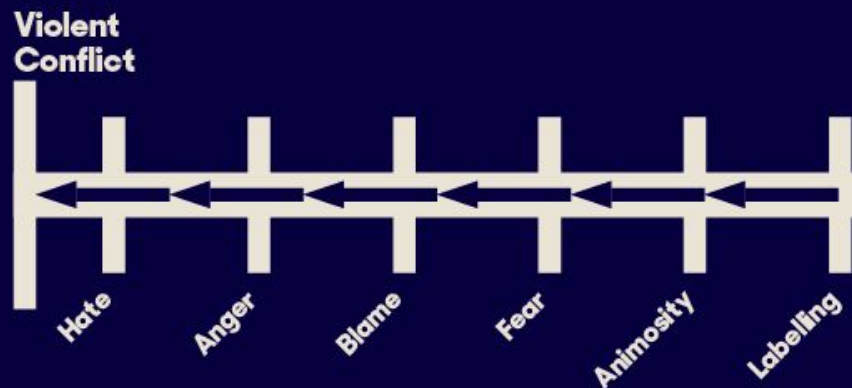
We've reached a critical and corrosive moment of seeing one another based on party affiliation, based on stereotype and datapoint, based on assumption and conjecture. Despite our striving for something better, we find ourselves dangerously polarized and divided. The good news is we don't have to stay here. In fact, we're already moving.

As we make our way out of this turbulent election season, it's time to look with conviction toward a shared future. One where we respect everyone's right to process the world in their own way, and where we make space to understand the very things that make us human: our dreams, our beliefs, even our fears.

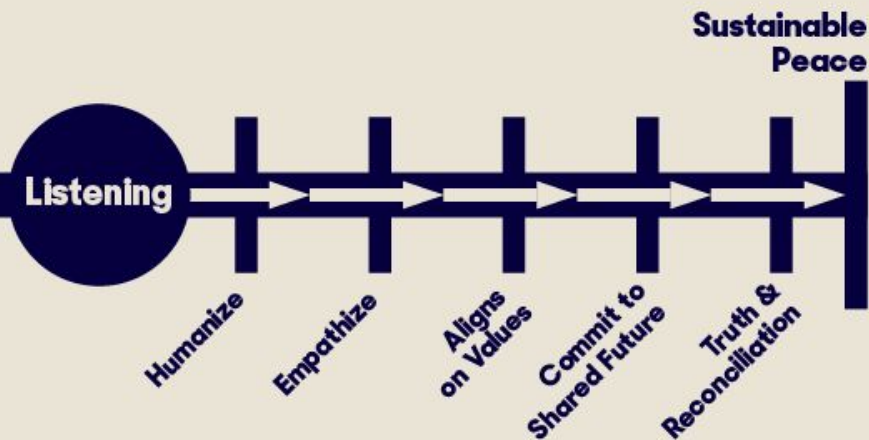
If you are one of the countless Americans who want to move together, past polarization, beyond the divisive headlines, and demand nuance, compassion, and our undeniable humanity—please, join us. We made this guide for you.

**It may feel like so many of us
want different things, but that's
because we are targets of
echo chambers reinforced by
algorithms that have become
our silos.**

Cycle of Hate



Breaking the Cycle of Hate



One thing's for sure— we all need to listen more and listen better.

We don't trust what anyone is telling us.

In 1973, 13% of Democrats and 16% of Republicans had “hardly any trust” in the press. By 2018, those numbers increased to 28% of Democrats and 65% of Republicans.
— General Social Survey, 2018

News and information bombard us 24/7—we're fatigued.

Two-thirds of Americans feel worn out by the sheer amount of news there is these days.
— Pew Research Center, 2020

We're losing touch with those on the “other side.”

Nearly 7 in 10 rural residents say their values differ from those of people who live in big cities, including about 4 in 10 who say their values are “very different.”
— The Washington Post, 2017

While we're more connected, we're more isolated than ever before.

Half of American adults claim to be suffering from loneliness, twice the number from a decade ago.
— Psychology Today, 2019

Yes, all of us.

Truer Better Deeper Listening

Is our path toward
a shared future.



“I believe that every human being needs to listen consciously in order to live fully.”

— Julian Treasure,
“5 Ways to Listen Better”

Listening benefits us *all* by giving us *each* the chance to be more human.

Listening helps us:

Empathize
Understand
Appreciate

Remember
Connect
Notice

Bond
Feel
Relate

Learn
Open Up
Release
Reconcile

Progress
Rebuild
Co-Create
Imagine

Validate
Relieve Tension
Build Community
Make Change

Let's take a
moment to reflect.

Pull out a pen & paper

What would you say are the most important

American Values?

Where do you see these values in everyday life?

Who upholds them?

What comes up for you when we say

The American Promise?

How would you define such a thing?

Can it be kept?

What does **The American Dream** mean to you?

Is there only one dream?

Who can achieve it, and how?

**When we know what we're listening for, we can
move forward together.**

Today

We reflect on who we are and how we interact with our communities.

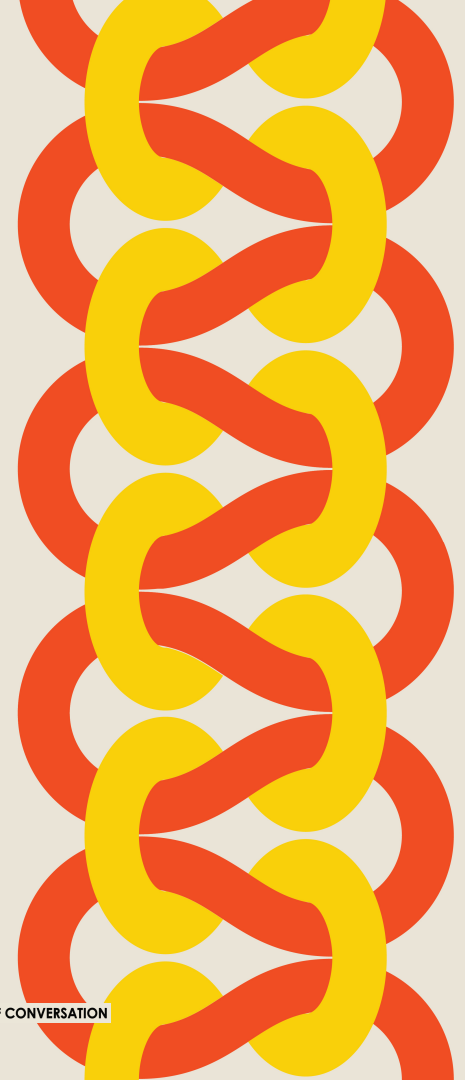
Tomorrow

We change the quality of our conversations.

In the long run

We work together for a shared future.

**What we mean is:
Listening is how we
weave together the
fabric of our community
for a shared future.**



Our lives are full of (sometimes hidden) opportunities to listen better and to understand those we see as “the other side.”

When we're around the
dinner table

When we're driving in the car

When we're out on the field

When we're just scrolling through the
feed

With the right skill set and the right
mindset, we can walk away from
these situations knowing more
about each other.

The following are tips, tricks,
techniques, approaches and
attitude shifts to help us all listen
better.



**This is how
we hear
each other.**

And as we deepen our listening, let's not be afraid to get strategic.

Pull out a pen & paper

What conversation do you want to have first?

Can you start this process in a way that feels both grounded and challenging?

Which policy issues are important to you?

How can co-creating more understanding around these issues move us forward together?

Who do you want to invite into dialogue?

Do you have relationships that could benefit from deeper listening? Who can you learn from?

Yes, listening is an act of compassion, and it's also a decision to move towards action.

**First things first.
Climb out of
your silo.
Call a relative.
Watch a different
news channel.**

**Next (and this is important!),
*check the biases.***

The key here is to be honest with ourselves.

Ask yourself:

What perspective am I coming from—my identity, my background, my passions, my education, my history?

What predetermined ideas should I try and check at the door?

Talk to someone— even if they might not agree with you.

Talk to someone at home

Here's a *check-in checklist* for setting up dialogue for success.

Set an intention

Ask ourselves:

Why are we chatting?
What are we going to discuss—and *not* discuss?
Can we both agree that understanding each other is the goal, not proving ourselves?

Agree to parameters

Ask yourselves:

Are we going to take equal turns and avoid interrupting each other? Are we going to ban insults, name-calling, and judgements?

Remember, check those biases!

Ask yourselves:

What are the different perspectives we may be coming from? What predetermined ideas can we check at the door? How can we make sure we show up with open minds?

Lower the stakes

Assure each other:

No matter what differences arise, we will see one another as a valid human being.

A big idea and perspective shift: Start from the shared and discover the difference.

Identify shared principles, shared values, or shared visions as a starting point of a conversation.

Start from a shared vision, and move backwards. How do we get to that? Unpack where you start to differ, and why. Ask questions. Emphasize the commonalities, not just the differences. Give time to answer, time to think, and time to listen.

We can make progress by focusing on the good that exists, not the problems that need addressing. If you're really wanting to dig into your differences on a stance or issue with someone, try the "4 D's" model of Appreciative Inquiry.

Discovery

What is good?

Appreciating

Dream

What could be?

Innovating

Design

What should be?

Co-Creating

Deploy

What will be?

Constructing

Be present, not petty.

Distractions discarded.

Phones on silent,
or face down.
Not on the computer.
TV off.

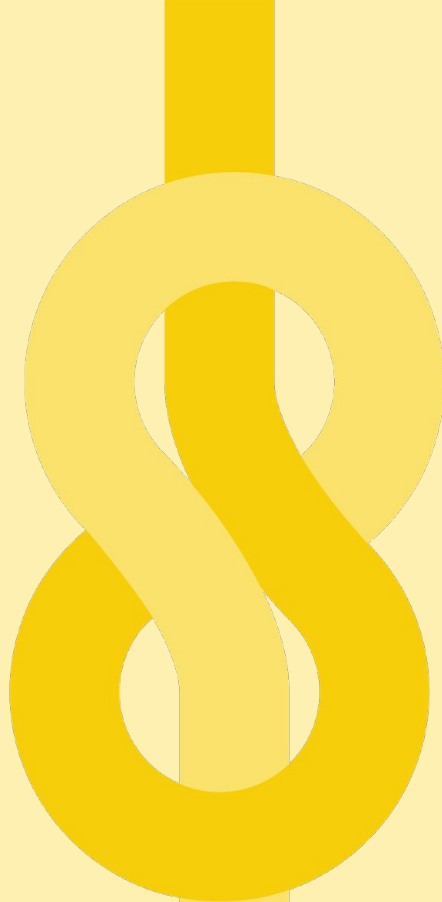
Intentional body language.

Face the speaker.
Don't scowl or express judgment.
Be open, not closed.
Nod and physically acknowledge
that you
are listening.

Listening ≠ debating

Focus on the act
of listening, not on planning
your next answer.

Do the work.



**Empathy isn't just
being warm and fuzzy.
Do the work and understand
someone's perspective.**

“...we shouldn't confuse emotional empathy, which is often based on gut response, with perspective taking, which asks us to do the conscious and intellectual work of taking the viewpoint of our opponents, even if we have no emotional warmth towards them...The goal isn't to feel what they're feeling. Instead, it's to understand why they feel the way they do.”

— Zaid Jilani,
“What Happens When You Tell Your
Story and I Tell Mine?”

That might feel like a lot. Need something shorter? Remember R A S A.

Receive their words in full.

Appreciate by acknowledging verbally and/or physically.

Summarize back to them to clarify that you've received.

Ask questions to go deeper, instead of just retorting.



Lastly, let's disrupt the cycle together.

Take time to reflect on your experience as a listener before, during, and after the conversation.

What do I experience as the indicators that someone is deeply listening to me?

When others are speaking, how do I demonstrate to them that I am fully present to what they are saying?

In a face-to-face conversation, do I find myself thinking about something other than what the other person is sharing?

What is my understanding about listening to others for the sake of listening itself, rather than for the sake of replying?

Do I recognize that deep listening is a form of heartfelt hospitality I extend to others by being fully present to them?

Cycle of Hate

Violent Conflict

Hate

Anger

Blame

Fear

Animosity

Labelling

Breaking the Cycle of Hate

Listening

Humanize

Empathize

Aligns on Values

Commit to Shared Future

Truth & Reconciliation

Sustainable Peace

**Remember:
listening is a
way to move
through life,
not something
that's 'one
and done.'**

We hope to create a growing community of listeners who are committed to understanding each other through deep listening. Together, we're saying NO to hate and polarization, and YES to our shared future.

Join the movement by taking the [Pledge to Listen](#), and using **#LetsTalk** and **#PledgeToListen** hashtags.

Research Links

- https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better/transcript
- https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation/transcript
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_7_Habits_of_Highly_Effective_People
- <https://heterodoxacademy.org/three-strategies-moral-disagreements/>
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_makes_a_good_interaction_between_divided_groups
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_importance_of_listening_skills
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_lessons_from_mister_rogers_that_can_help_americans_be_neighbors_again
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/10_tips_for_getting_people_to_talk_across_political_differences
- <https://www.qsb.stanford.edu/insights/how-bridge-political-divides>
- <https://respectandrebillion.com>
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