

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 3

How much more creative might you be if you listened well and built on the ideas of others?

Listen to create...

“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand.

Karl Menninger ~ US Psychiatrist



“I’m Listening, Trust Me!”

Do you listen well? Really listen? Or do you spend the time whilst others are talking, thinking of what you will say next??

I was in a café in a garden centre on a recent Monday, waiting at the counter for my coffee. Two ladies walked up beside me, chattering away to each other very animatedly.

As I waited, my ears attuned to their conversation and I realised they were not talking to each other but at each other. One was talking about her garden and the other was talking about her mother. It was surreal and a bit sad, like a Woody Allen movie.

By chance I had just attended an Improvisation Comedy course that weekend. Improvisation

puts great emphasis on listening to the other performers.

That’s “listening” not “hearing”. Taking the time to consider what is said and so perhaps finding a deeper meaning to the words.

If we listen in Improvisation, we can build more on the creative ideas of others and we can prevent our own preconceived ideas ruining a scene with an insensible response. It also provides the other players with the confidence to develop the scene further, as Menninger says, “it makes us unfold and expand”. In short, by listening we can make the work more creative and humorous.

A terrific book on listening is Nancy Kline’s [“Time To Think ~ Listening to ignite the human mind”](#). In this highly readable book, she expounds on the ten components of a “Thinking Environment”, many of which are relevant to Improv Comedy and business, such as giving Attention and Encouragement, treating others as Equals, allowing Feelings, finding value in Diversity and having a relaxed sense of Ease.

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Nancy believes that the Thinking Environment, in which people really listen to others, helps people to think well and produces new, improved ideas much faster. And isn't that what organisations need these days?

I have been using her techniques in some recent coaching sessions and I find it really relaxing and freeing to just listen without seeking the next thing to say. I have noticed it also helps people to develop their own ideas, given the thinking time to do so.

SO

How are your listening skills? Are you a friend people move towards? Would you like to help people expand and unfold?

ACTION

1. As a small step towards being a better listener, try really listening to at least one other person this week. Don't think what your response will be, just listen. You may find it really relaxing
2. For a bigger step, why not invest £6 in Nancy Kline's book to improve your listening skills? No I don't get commission, but it would be great to know that more people out there are really listening and perhaps being more creative
3. For your next meeting, run a listening exercise at the start. Have people work in pairs. One should talk about a favourite passion (any topic) for one minute

uninterrupted. Then have them swap round. Debrief on the pleasure of being able to speak for a minute uninterrupted.

TO CLOSE

As I left the café, the two ladies were chattering away over their coffee. They seemed to be talking about the same subject but as they were both talking at the same time it was difficult to be sure. Well at least one of us was listening.

Have a socially networked week.

[John Brooker](#), *Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.*



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