

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 64

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen...

Elicit information ...

"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen." –

Rachel Naomi Remen, Clinical Professor of Family Medicine, UCSF School of Medicine



My Lips Are Sealed

Have you ever done something really stupid?

Last week, I was in Southern Ireland, combining work with a family holiday. Driving through the beautiful scenery of the Wicklow Mountains, I felt my lips drying out and reached for the lip salve.

Eyes fixed on the road, I flipped off the lid and applied the salve to my upper lip. I thought it felt drier than usual, but applied it to my lower lip too. When my lips stuck together, I looked at the "lip salve" and realised I had applied a glue stick! The family collapsed in giggles whilst Dad tried to maintain his dignity and work out who had left the glue stick next to the lip salve.

"Don't worry," said my wife, "at least it should prompt a Gorilla article." Whilst thanking her for the sympathy, I mused on the metaphor of "my

lips are sealed" and thought how powerful it can be in business if we let others talk.

Just sit back and think for a moment. When was the last time you were in a meeting where everybody managed to talk without being interrupted?

- Do senior colleagues speak over junior colleagues in your organisation?
- When you last had a discussion with a colleague, did you find yourself thinking of your response half way through their sentence?
- Have you interrupted someone when they were speaking recently? (Ask your partner!)
- Do you find yourself tuning out when certain people speak? Do you think other people tune out when you are speaking?

The result of this can often be frustration, especially for people who like to take time to consider what they are going to say. Other people decide that they won't bother contributing if they are not going to be heard.

SO

One excellent exercise I use in my workshops to promote listening is for people to pair up and go for a walk, preferably outside.

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 64

One person speaks for three minutes about a situation, how they feel about it etc. During this time, the other person must remain silent; they can only ask "and what else?" if the other person dries up. Next, they swap roles.

At the end, the speaker writes a summary of their situation in one sentence. An alternative end is to have the listener or both people write a summary.

This luxury of speaking without interruption can be therapeutic for some people and I have had the exercise described as cathartic. For others, this verbalisation without interruption helps to clarify the situation, almost like plotting a course.

Another useful exercise to overcome nervousness is to have everyone write down their thoughts and discuss them with a nearby colleague. Once this is done they can contribute a joint answer.

A third way is to give everyone time to make notes on what they might say, then give them one minute each to explain their thinking.

ACTION

- Try to introduce these exercises in to your next meeting.
- The next time you have a discussion with a group, notice how often people interrupt. Ask yourself how much they are listening to one another.

TO CLOSE

Whilst away I used a digital voice recorder to capture thoughts. This is a handy device to have in the car. One way to use it is to verbalise your thoughts about a situation.

If you choose you can then play it back and consider what the situation sounds like to a third party. The added bonus is you can't mistake it for a stick of glue.

May you be listened to this week.

John Brooker | *Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.*



*We facilitate leaders and teams
in medium to large organisations
internationally to:*

- *Make Meetings Outstanding*
- *Make Transformation Simpler*
- *Make Innov8ion Flow*

Imagine what we can do for you...

Contact John or Kate Brooker:

Speak: +44 (0) 20 8869 9990

Write: hi@yesand.eu

Read: www.yesand.eu