



How do you listen? By Emma Symons

One of the most important things that we can do for each other is to listen, but how often do we do it well?

It is a proven fact that people suffering with mental health issues feel calmer and do much better when they are actively listened to, so this month we are going to explore how we listen and how to do it better.

Below are the five levels of listening; most of us will identify with some levels more than others! Take a moment to assess which ones you use most and try to work on improving until you can listen at level 5.

Level 1 – Closed Listening.

With this form of listening, you have already decided you don't want to hear, or are not interested in what's being said, so you may have crossed arms or legs and be sat back in your chair looking around the room. The intention here is not to take in what you are being told as you don't really care about the topic. This can be seen as rude and slightly aggressive. Which situations do you do this in?

Level 2 – Head Listening.

It's all me, me, me. This type of listening is when you hear something and immediately relate it to yourself or when that happened to you. The intention is to make yourself look good or to give your opinion so the focus shifts to you and not the other person. This is unhelpful and can make the other person feel devalued. When do you do this?

Level 3 – Ears Listening.

The intention here is to gather information or to give advice. This is important when you need to listen for specific information like knowledge, times, appointments or when getting directions but it's not useful in emotionally charged situations.

Level 4 – Heart Listening.

This is a form of listening where your intent is to hear beneath the words and to pick up the emotion between the lines. It is where you listen for the content of the conversation and the emotion behind it and you tailor your reply to reflect the emotion you pick up from that person. It takes practise to move to this type of listening.

Level 5 – Open Listening.

This type of listening is to be open to hearing what the other person values. You are totally focused on the other person and you're present and in the moment. To really pick up on other people's values it is important to take a look at your own values and become aware of what's important to you. Take time to really listen to yourself and others and figure out what the values are that come up in the conversation.

If you recognise yourself as using the first two levels of listening most of the time (let's face it we're all guilty to some degree), then try and make a conscious effort to move your listening to level 3

and above, as these are the most effective forms.

It's also important to remember that when we are listening, we don't always need to fill the gaps in the conversation and we should learn to be comfortable allowing a little silence to give the other person chance to reflect. It is also not necessary to always try to 'fix' someone when you are talking to them. Listening to people's problems using level 4 and 5 instead of levels 1 and 2, and offering support and not solutions, can be the best way to help someone feel valued and to allow them to reach their own way of dealing with the dilemma.

I challenge you this month to work on your listening skills and you will find that it improves your communication and, no doubt, your relationships will also benefit.



'Listening is an art that requires attention over talent, spirit over ego, others over self.' Dean Jackson

TAP YOURSELF HAPPY...TAPPING THERAPY

(Emotional Freedom Techniques)

According to the developer of EFT Gary Craig, tapping on different parts of the body helps balance energy and reduce physical and emotional pain. It involves tapping specific points on the body, primarily on the head and the face, in a particular sequence, and while so doing the person focuses on the issue that they wish to treat. The beauty of tapping is that it can be practised anywhere and at any time, putting us in control of our emotions before things escalate.

How does it work? As with acupuncture and acupressure, tapping involves the body's energy meridian points, which are a concept in Chinese medicine; areas of the body through which energy flows.

In this theory, blocks or imbalances in the flow of energy lead to ill health. According to EFT advocates, tapping on these meridian points with the fingertips restores the balance of energy to resolve physical and emotional issues.

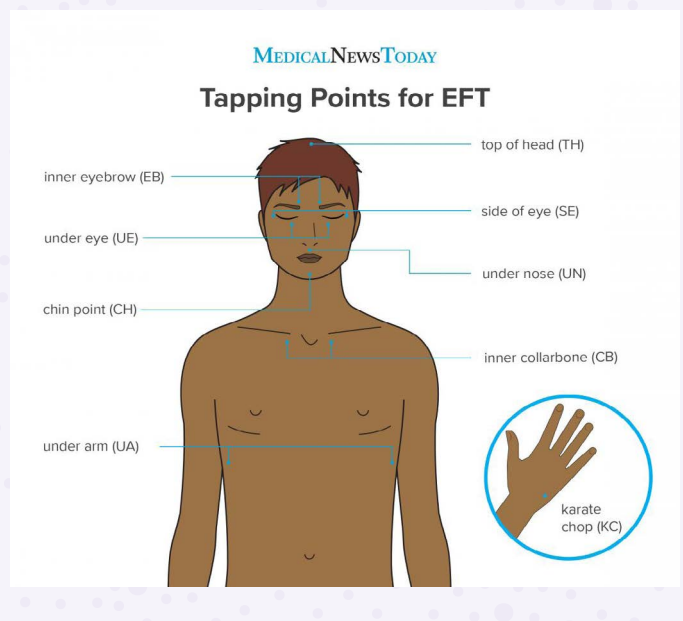
It can also work in a similar way to mindfulness, as it can draw a person's attention to their body and breathing, providing a mental distraction from the issues that are causing anxiety or stress. Many years ago now I developed anxiety around driving long journeys following a nasty car accident. Before getting into the car I would use the tapping technique to distract my thoughts and if I felt nervous at any point on the journey, would find a safe place to pull over, tap some more to calm my mind and then move off. I was a little sceptical of the practice at first, but found it to be incredibly effective.

The tapping points in sequence are as follows:

- top of the head (TOH): directly in the center of the top of the head
- beginning of the eyebrow (EB): the beginning of the brow, just above and to the side of the nose

- side of the eye (SE): on the bone at the outside corner of the eye
- under the eye (UE): on the bone under the eye, approximately 1 inch (in) below the pupil
- under the nose (UN): the point between the nose and upper lip
- chin point (CH): halfway between the underside of the lower lip and the bottom of the chin
- beginning of the collarbone (CB): the point where the breastbone (sternum), collarbone, and first rib intersect
- under the arm (UA): at the side of the body, approximately 4 in below the armpit

When tapping, use two or more fingertips and repeat the tap approximately five times on each point.



The perfect summer cocktail: The Hugo (not named after Jeremy's youngest!)

If you're not a huge fan of Prosecco but have a couple of bottles knocking about in the fridge, this is the perfect cocktail to use it up, whilst creating a delicious summer cooler in the process! A simple blend of elderflower cordial, Prosecco and fresh mint and lime, this drink will kick off your aperitivo hour in style.

Ingredients: 30ml of elderflower cordial / 1 dash of soda water / Prosecco to top up

Ice / Fresh mint / Lime

Method: Scoop a handful of ice into a large wine glass along with some torn mint leaves

Add the elderflower cordial with a splash of soda water then top up with Prosecco

Give a quick stir and garnish with a wheel of lime

Makes a refreshing drink without the Prosecco too...

