

Inward Listening:
A Path to an Authentic Relationship with Your Inner Self

Foundations for Inward Listening:

The following are core foundations to building a healthy relationship with one's inner self through inward listening:

- Inward listening is the key to meeting our original, innate wisdom. We can learn how to live our lives guided by this wisdom.
- Being in our bodies such that we experience and allow feelings and sensations to come and go naturally is essential to mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social health.
- All feelings are okay and part of being fully human and alive.
- Emotions and the bodily sensations that accompany them need room to be experienced *in order to then be released* so that we can allow new life experiences to arrive.
- When emotions are habitually blocked, suppressed, or avoided, their blocked energy will lead to symptoms (and constipated relationships with self, others, and life overall).
- Symptoms manifest when we have repeatedly failed to honor the message of our feelings/sensations when they first arise.
- Symptoms, then, are powerful inner messengers alerting us that we've gotten off-track with our true self needs and/or that we have something we need to take care of (i.e., current life situations and/or from our past).
- Becoming fluent with our emotional life is central to being able to meet one's own needs. Befriending oneself in these ways leads to true confidence: increased calm, strength, and flexibility in responding to life situations.
- Essentially, by listening to your feelings, sensations, inner truth, and by meeting your needs, your insides will begin to trust you more. Because you are listening to and meeting your needs in this way, the loud voice of symptoms will naturally begin to diminish.

Steps for Practicing Inward Listening:

- 1) Set the intention to tune inward with a reverent sense of curiosity, listening to your body and emotions as true messengers of your inner wisdom.
- 2) Scan throughout your whole body....sense where there is holding or tension or noteworthy sensation.
- 3) Bring your attention to this bodily sensation with a light, compassionate curiosity. Notice the nature of this sensation. For example, try to imagine what this sensation would be like if it had a color, shape, size, texture, movement, weight or density? Allow enough space and time to thoroughly experience the quality of it.
- 4) Once you've tuned into the "suchness" of this bodily sensation, see if you can sense what emotion(s) are being expressed in the experience. Don't get hung up on trying to name the emotion; just trying to tune in is enough and identifying the feelings becomes clearer with practice.
- 5) Now pose the question, "If this sensation (or feeling) were saying something, what would it be saying?" Keep asking until there is an answer that "pops up" on its own or has you experience a "felt shift" inside (i.e., a gut-sense that the response that arises seems genuine and/or to fit with a core truth).*
- 6) Now pose the question, "If this felt sense were asking for something, what would it need or be asking for?" Again, take time to listen and repeat the question until you have a felt shift inside showing you've come upon a genuine need underlying this feeling.*
- 7) Having sensed/heard what is needed, take time to allow different solutions or ideas to arise. Again, this is your inner wisdom, inviting you to take action to honor your core needs and truth.
- 8) Now, it is important to sense how and when you can follow through with these actions in a mindful way that will get your needs met.
- 9) Now, return to an awareness of your inner bodily state. Notice how the sensations might have shifted/changed due to your practice of inward listening; this is your body giving you feedback. If there is relief, your body is acknowledging how helpful it is that you have attended to your core truth needs. If there is still some tension, there may be more your body/wisdom wants to share with you. Continue with the above steps as many times as you'd like in order to increase your relief and deepen connection with your inner truth.
- 10) Practice, practice, practice. After time, this process will become more natural and fluid, allowing your intuitive wisdom to guide you skillfully and compassionately in your everyday life.

*See Eugene Gendlin's "focusing" literature for more information on the "felt sense."