

# **MORAL INJURY MEETING**

## **A TWELVE-STEP PROGRAM TOWARD RECOVERY FROM MORAL INJURY FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS**

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE MORAL INJURY MEETING

Those familiar with Twelve-Step groups know that recovery comes from those who attend the meetings and find support with each other. This meeting is similar in its approach. The deep listening (see the Appendix *Primer on Deep Listening*) process is one of the reasons why this program is so effective. It keeps the focus on the individual and those who listen, not on a client- therapist relationship in which the therapist is the authority. We are here because we have problems and in seeking support, we also support others.

Confidentiality is crucial to closed meetings, which are standard, unless an open meeting has been determined ahead of time. Everything that is shared during the meeting or in-one-to-one conversations must be kept confidential. We don't say who was at a meeting or what they said even to our spouse or best friend. There is one exception to this rule, which is sharing anonymously: if we want mention something that helped us at a meeting we say "someone said," or "I heard at a meeting..." without attribution to a person or name. Protecting privacy in the group is a must for the group to continue and to protect individuals.

We suggest that the leader of the meeting be a volunteer, that the leadership change every week, or every month at the longest, and that topics be suggested the week before so people can think about them during the week. Following a format ensures consistency and helps people know what to expect, regardless of when or where they attend a meeting.

We suggest delaying major changes in your life or relationships while you are processing moral injury with a group or a sponsor who has worked through the process. It will change you, and you may feel differently about yourself and your life afterward.

Moral Injury repair meetings start with a number of suggested readings, an important part of the healing process. Each week we hear how to live with injury, we hear the injury, the repairing of the injury, the tools, the steps, the statement on sharing, the traditions, and the promises. We hear over and over that it is possible to live with moral injury, that we don't have to do it perfectly, that we have responsibility for our role in the process, and that we are here to share with and share with others, not to give advice or take control.

We suggest committing adequate time to do the readings every time, at least until the

group has been meeting for six months and heard these things over and over. The messages in them are important for moral repair. After hearing them every week for six months the group will have a better idea of what is important for learning to live with injury and so will the other members of the group.

If the group reaches a time that a change in format seems good, do it only after careful consideration and by group consensus: that is, everyone who is a member (and the only requirement for membership is “having been morally affected by war we want to make life better for ourselves and our families”) should vote and substantial unanimity is reached. Listening to one another with respect for each other’s differences is an important part of recovery. Three weeks notice is usually given for group consensus of this type, so as many as possible group members can participate in the process. Regardless of changes, it is suggested that the steps, the statement on sharing, the traditions, and the promises be read at all meetings. If the readings take a half an hour the meeting might be scheduled for an hour and a half, giving an hour for sharing. Meetings that are large may also want to split into smaller groups after the readings so each person has more time to share, or groups may want to have confidential groups for veterans only who are more comfortable speaking to other veterans.

You are the only authority on your own moral injury. Learning to live with the injury is not a race, and it takes time and persistence and will likely involve many failures. Change is our guide. Sometimes just noticing we did something we’re trying not to do is all we can at the time, but it is a change, and small changes accumulate to real recovery.

All the steps are suggestions. Each person who takes them has done a very important thing for himself or herself: admitted that his or her current methods of dealing with life are not effective, listened to an outside suggestion, and chosen to follow it. Learning how to make healthy choices for ourselves is at the heart of the program, so you have made one important step in attending a meeting.

The steps are in a specific order for a reason. Step Nine “Amends” comes after eight other steps. At that point, you will have a support system and more balance to take that step. We have found the steps made such a difference in our lives that by the time we came to the ones we didn’t want to do, we were actually willing and even eager to try them. This is because we had the feeling they would probably help us too, and they did. The only way to do the steps wrong is not to do them. The steps are a process. Working them again and again will bring a depth of recovery that is almost inexplicable and lead you to a life more connected to others and more fulfilling to you.

## THE PROGRAM IN ACTION/SUGGESTED FORMAT

### *Welcome*

We are a group of veterans and people who love the veterans in their lives. We come together to find support and understanding. Look around you, and you will see people who have experienced many of the same things you may have experienced.

In this meeting we want to encourage open sharing by giving our full and courteous attention to the person who is speaking. We have a few ground rules about how we interact:

In this meeting, we try to speak about our own feelings and patterns of interaction rather than the details of who said what to whom. We share our experience, strength and hope, using the word “I.” We do this to try to keep the focus on taking responsibility for ourselves. Blaming others and dumping are to be avoided. Dumping means describing all the awful things that happened this week.

We want to create a safe place to share so that we all can feel free to grow and recover so we do not allow crosstalk: crosstalk is interrupting, questioning, or making comments afterwards about what someone has just said either by name or using the word “you”. We also do not give advice. We do not come to the meeting to fix other people, but to find support and learn ways of taking care of ourselves.

What is said at the meeting must remain at the meeting. We do not discuss what is said at the meeting outside of the meeting. We also ask that each member try to be aware of how much time we take to share so everyone has an opportunity to do so.

Thank you

### *Preamble*

We are a fellowship of people who have been affected by war and military service. We share experience, strength, and hope with each other to better deal with the effects of war in our lives. The only requirement for membership is that, having been affected by war, we have a sincere desire to make life better for ourselves and our families. We do not wish to blame or compare experiences but rather to understand the effects of war on people

and how those effects can affect family members and friends, thereby becoming free to grow and accept responsibility for our own lives.

We are a self-supporting group through our own contributions. We are not allied with any sect, denomination, political movement, ideology, organization, or institution. We do not wish to engage in any controversy nor endorse or oppose any cause.

The primary purpose of our group is to learn to deal with the effects of war and moral injury on our lives, and to develop healthy patterns to cope with these.

### ***The Injury***

The military trains everyone to fight. Basic training is a process designed to develop skills which will keep a combatant alive and fighting long after he or she might have given up under more normal circumstances. These patterns do not go away by themselves if they have been burned into the soul by traumatic experiences. There is no basic un-training.

Moral injury results from having to make difficult moral choices under extreme conditions, experiencing morally anguishing events or duties, witnessing immoral acts, or behaving in ways that profoundly challenge moral conscience and identity and the values that support them. Moral injury is found in feelings of survivor guilt, grief, shame, remorse, anger, despair, mistrust, and betrayal by authorities. In its most severe forms, it can destroy moral identity and the will to live.

The struggle of combat veterans to return to civilian life can be even more difficult than serving in war and last a lifetime.... While moral injury is an ancient wound of war that is documented in literature, in modern times, moral injury has remained largely unaddressed or inadequately addressed because it is confused with post-traumatic stress.

Veterans of war have developed certain useful strategies to help them survive.

Emotional numbing allows the person to put aside feelings and do whatever it takes to survive or help others survive. This is appropriate and effective. Later such numbing may include a sense of not really being a person, feelings of not fitting in, believing that no one can understand, feeling or being told that one has no emotions, and not being able to feel emotions in situations calling for intimacy, tenderness, sexuality or grief. Efforts to avoid thoughts or feelings associated with the trauma may include isolating, substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, food, cigarettes), and other compulsive behaviors (watching TV,

exercising, workaholism, perfectionism, gambling, risk-taking, sexual adventures).

Veterans experience a broken conscience which keeps them from participating fully in family life yet prefer to think war didn't affect them. Veterans develop painful patterns of denial. In this group, we believe it is okay to be bothered by trauma and moral injury. It is common to experience broken conscience and moral injury during and after war.

### *Repairing The Injury*

When we let go of denial and work on acceptance of these consequences of war, we become able to learn from our experiences and to change and grow in healthy ways that were not open to us before. Moral injury negatively impacts our relationship with ourselves.

By attending these meetings on a regular basis, veterans, families, and friends can begin to let go of denial and admit the experience of war has affected us all. By working the twelve steps ourselves, we find we learn to know and accept ourselves as valuable human beings no matter how imperfect or perfect we once thought ourselves to be.

Here we turn our focus off of others and onto our own recovery, and we focus on healing ourselves. It is painful to realize we've been affected by war, painful to remember and work through trauma, and painful to accept our solutions are no longer working for us. We have to feel our own pain.

Both veteran and family will learn that working through the pain is, surprisingly, learning how to live. Pain is a part of life, and trying not to feel it perpetuates it while feeling it lets it go. It may come back, but then we have experienced feeling pain, surviving the bad feeling and seeing it go, and we can do it again. When we stop suppressing bad feelings, we get the good ones back. We also develop the capacity to feel painful feelings without necessarily believing they are permanent.

Letting go of unrealistic expectations, such as "I should be over this," is tremendously healing. Why should I be over this? is a healing question. I'm human. I have to be me. I have a right to feel what I feel, and I have a right to mourn what I lost whenever I feel the loss.

We are here to share our stories and wounds with one another without denying or minimizing their impact on our lives. We are here to accept war has changed us. We can

refashion a new identity that accepts our experiences and our past actions without ignoring or denying their consequences. Moral injury will always be a part of who we are but we do not need to let it destroy us.

In this meeting we do not compare pain. We share pain and work toward acceptance of ourselves and others as worthy of love and respect no matter what we've been through. As we work the twelve suggested steps ourselves, we find we can accept our injury.

### ***Some Tools For Recovery***

We suggest talking to one another after the meeting, going for coffee, using the telephone, passing a phone list at each meeting so people can call one another for support. Along with name, phone number and comments "best time to call" and "okay to leave a message?" are two useful column headings on the phone list. Everyone needs a friend to talk to when pain returns, and we can be that for each other.

### ***The Twelve Steps***

1. We admitted we cannot change our experiences of war or the effects war has had on ourselves and on our family.
2. We believed that powers or a power greater than ourselves can restore us to wholeness.
3. We made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of what we call sacred as we explore our core values and beliefs about our spiritual ground or higher power.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to what we believe to be sacred, to ourselves, and to another human the exact nature of our injuries.
6. We're entirely ready to have powers greater than ourselves to aid us in healing and accepting ourselves and our injuries.
7. We humbly asked what we call sacred to remove our feelings of shame.
8. We made a list of all people we had harmed and are willing to make amends to them

all.

9. We made direct amends to those people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure us or others, and we made direct amends to ourselves.

10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our relationship with what we hold sacred, praying or meditating for spiritual understanding and discernment of what is good and right in ourselves and for the power to carry that out.

12. Having had an inner awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*It is not necessary to achieve perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is our willingness to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.*

### ***The Twelve Traditions***

The Twelve Traditions were created to express an understanding of continuous effectiveness and unity throughout the twelve-steps. The Twelve Traditions were also developed to best ensure how the program will function and run. Following are the Twelve Traditions written by AA and adopted by Moral Injury Repair in order to pursue the same understanding.

1. Our common welfare and personal recovery are interdependent and promote unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving absolute as it may express itself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants. They do not govern.

3. The only requirement for membership is having been affected by war and wanting to make life better for ourselves and our families.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Moral Injury Repair groups or Moral Injury Repair as a whole.



5. Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the veteran, family members, or friend who still suffers.
6. An MIR group ought never endorse, finance, or lend its name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every MIR group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. MIR should remain forever nonprofessional, but (if we ever grow that much) our service centers may employ special workers.
9. MIR ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. MIR has no opinion on outside issues, hence the MIR name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We may prefer to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television, and film.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

### ***The Promises***

If we are painstaking about working the twelve steps, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity, and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will realize that what we hold sacred is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if

we work for them.

### ***Conversation***

Suggested topics in here--the questions from before

- Who are we?
- How do we come to grips with what we have seen or done?
- How do we make sense of our actions?
- Can we trust ourselves to do what is right?
- We come home to a nation that either ignores us or blindly praises us for our service, yet how can we accept such thanks when we feel ashamed, not just of what we did, but of who we are?
- What is the difference between shame and guilt, and how does shame shape our current identity?
- How do we live with moral injury?

### ***Closing***

The opinions expressed here are strictly those of the people who spoke and do not represent the group as a whole. Take what you liked and leave the rest. We use anonymity to protect the group. What you have heard here and whom you have seen here is confidential. Keep it within the walls of this room or the confines of your mind. While the stories of others are to be held in confidence, we encourage you to share your own story beyond this group and talk about your own experiences with those you trust.

Would you all care to join me in the Serenity Prayer?

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

## ***ADDITIONAL RESOURCES***

### ***Controlling (Needing To Feel Powerful)***

When we control others, we want them to act in a certain way—we do not give them choices. We use various means to control others: blowing up, quiet anger, disapproval, being nice, apologizing, silence, guilt, reminders, suggestions, lectures, pouting, wishing, complaining, sighing, being hurt, and waiting for attention. We send two messages to others without knowing it: “You have all the power” (because I’m powerless), and “It’s your fault I’m unhappy” (because you’re not okay the way you are). The message, “You have all the power,” is what we really believe. We habitually let other people determine how we act, what we value, who we are. Somewhere we learned to believe that others shape our lives, and we can’t do anything about it. This attitude is a habit—a hard one to break.

We do have choices. Although we cannot change others, we can become more like the person we were meant to be. If I am violent, I need to identify the other side of the message which I am sending to people. When I hit people, I am announcing I’m powerless and I don’t know how to get along with people. I can learn those skills, one day at a time, instead of letting other people’s behavior turn me into the type of person who hits other people. The feeling of power I get when I do that lasts only a minute, but the damage I do is permanent. If I’m manipulative, the other side of this message, “I’m powerless,” lets me off the hook. Actually, I have all kinds of power—but I use it indirectly. Using power indirectly lets me remain blameless.

Signs of Controlling:

- 1) Tension—Controlling behavior makes everyone nervous. The person doing the controlling gets tense. The person being controlled tends to get resistant.
- 2) Blaming—If I want control, I will blame someone else. I want others to change first.
- 3) Urgency—Whenever I feel the overwhelming need to make something happen, or to prevent something from happening, I know I’m feeling the urge to control. Fear and anger are usually parts of the urgency.
- 4) Refusing to feel—Controlling behavior requires discounting, denying or ignoring our own or other’s feelings.

## ***Writing About Feelings***

- Writing is only writing. Writing down a feeling does not engrave it in stone forever. As it flows out the end of your pen, each stuffed feeling will begin its natural journey toward release. The ones that have been stuffed longest and deepest may take the longest to release and may need to be written and felt over and over again to let them go. It takes as long as it takes.
- Feelings do not have to make sense or be reasonable. Feelings are how you do feel, not how you ought to feel. No one else can tell you how you feel or what you should feel, although people often do.
- Communicate with feelings rather than thoughts and actions. When we deal in feelings, we tend to come to know ourselves and each other much better.
- We can feel the feeling while realizing that because I feel it does not mean that it is true. I do not have to believe or act as if my feeling were reality.
- It is okay to feel (and think) two (or more) opposite things at the same time.
- The reverse of love is not hate. It is indifference.
- If something that comes up makes you think of suicide, remember the opposite of suicide is not going on with life as it has been, it is healing your life.
- For couples: If you find yourself writing and thinking about your partner, stop and refocus on yourself. Write about what you feel, not details of who said what to whom, or what someone else made you feel. Recovery lies within yourself, not in changing and fixing other people so they can give you what you need. What another person may write about you is none of your business. Wanting to know is a sign of enmeshment and lack of healthy boundaries. If we each work on our own side of the street, before we know it we will have removed the rubble of the past and be able to meet in the middle.

## ***Checklist For Hidden Anger***

Here is a checklist to help you determine if you are hiding your anger from yourself. Any of these is usually a sign of hidden, unexpressed anger.

1. Procrastination in the completion of imposed tasks.
2. Perpetual or habitual lateness.
3. A liking for sadistic or ironic humor.
4. Sarcasm, cynicism, or flippancy in conversation.
5. Over-politeness, constant cheerfulness, attitude of “grin and bear it.”
6. Frequent sighing.
7. Smiling while hurting.
8. Frequent disturbing or frightening dreams.
9. Over-controlled, monotone speaking voice.
10. Difficulty in getting to sleep or in sleeping through the night.
11. Boredom, apathy, loss of interest in things you are usually enthusiastic about.
12. Slowing down of movements.
13. Getting tired more easily than usual.
14. Excessive irritability over trifles.
15. Getting drowsy at inappropriate times.
16. Sleeping more than usual.
17. Waking up tired rather than rested or refreshed.
18. Clenched jaws—especially while sleeping.
19. Facial tics, spasmodic foot movements, habitual fist clenching and similar repeated physical acts done unintentionally or unaware.
20. Grinding of the teeth—especially while sleeping.
21. Chronically stiff or sore neck.
22. Chronic depression—extended periods of feeling down for no reason.
23. Stomach ulcers.

This is not about rage. Rage is anger out of control and taking over your whole being. This is about the feelings we call “irritation,” “annoyance,” “getting mad,” etc. All of these negative feelings share one thing in common: they are considered undesirable at best, sinful or destructive at worst.

We are taught to avoid them—to avoid having them if possible but certainly to avoid expressing them. Unfortunately, many people go overboard in controlling negative feelings; they control not only their expression but their awareness of them, too. It is the anger you are unaware of which can do the most damage to you and to your relationships with other people.

The process of dealing with negative feelings can be divided into three parts for purposes of discussion, although the living of it is all of a piece. The parts are:

1. Recognition of the feelings.
2. Owning it—acknowledging that it is yours.
3. Discharging it—acting on it in some way.

### ***Let Go...***

To “let go” does not mean to stop caring--it means I can’t do it for someone else.

To “let go” is not to cut myself off--it’s the realization I can’t control another.

To “let go” is not to enable but to allow learning from natural consequences.

To “let go” is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To “let go” is not to try to change or blame another--it’s to make the most of myself.

To “let go” is not to care for but to care about.

To “let go” is not to fix but to be supportive.

To “let go” is not to judge but to allow another to be a human being.

To “let go” is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes but to allow others to affect their destinies.

To “let go” is not to be protective--it’s to permit another to face reality.

To “let go” is not to deny but to accept.

To “let go” is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead, to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.

To “let go” is not to adjust everything to my desires but to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it.

To “let go” is not to criticize and regulate anybody but to try to become what I dream I can be.

To “let go” is not to regret the past but to grow and live for the future.

To “let go” is to fear less and love more.

### ***Sharing And Honesty***

- Once you are in the right group, you may feel safe, but you may also feel shy. This brings us to another paradox of recovery: The more you reveal yourself, the safer you will feel. The more vulnerable you make yourself, the quicker you can recover.

- Share your experience with members of your support group, a good friend, or a therapist.

Your problems will become clearer when you give words to them. You will discover how much harder it is to fool yourself when you actually hear yourself saying something that you know is either a partial truth or a full lie. At the same time, when you are describing signs of progress or small victories, you will find their effect amplified when you applaud yourself in the presence of others.

- There are some important things to remember about sharing. It is most helpful if you acknowledge how you feel at the moment, whatever those feelings are. Remember, you are not speaking to please others or to be graded on your recovery. You are speaking to help yourself.

- Embrace your feelings and accept them, even if you feel momentarily miserable. By honestly describing your feelings, you will get a clearer understanding of the experience you are going through. Moreover, there is a significant chance that your painful feelings will diminish. A side benefit is that you will almost always help someone else who is not yet brave enough to speak.

- When speaking, it is important to avoid long, detailed descriptions of what others have done to you, the facts of a given circumstance, the obsessive details. This will only feed your problem, not release you from it. Keep the focus on how you feel, how events affected you and what you are doing about it.

- Finally, when sharing publicly, avoid comparing yourself with others. It is a very natural tendency to believe that you are not doing as well as some other women in your group, especially some who may have been working on their recoveries for longer periods. Their development is not for you to judge; it is totally irrelevant to yours. Keep your focus on yourself.

—from *Smart Love* by Jody Hayes, page 22.

*A note from the compilers:*

*We adapted this Twelve-Step Program from Patience Mason's "Suggested Format For A 12 Step Group for Trauma Survivors, Their Families and Friends" published by Patience Press in High Springs, FL. Material about moral injury and stories of veteran recovery can be found in Soul Repair: Recovery from Moral Injury After War by Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini (Beacon Press 2012). Additional resources can be found at [www.soulrepair.org](http://www.soulrepair.org).*

## ***APPENDIX: PRIMER ON DEEP LISTENING***

1. In Small groups:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/features.php?id=15570>

In *[The Sacred Art of Listening](#)*, Kay Lindahl writes about what we tried to achieve in our group: "There's something beyond technique when two or more people are deeply listening to each other. It is an awareness that not only are we present to each other, we are present to something that is spiritual, holy, sacred."

But this kind of "deep listening" goes against the cultural grain. Lindahl cites research studies by the International Listening Association which report that we spend about 45 percent of our time listening, but we are distracted, preoccupied, or forgetful about 75 percent of that time. The average attention span for adults is about 22 seconds.

Immediately after listening to someone talk, we usually recall only about half of what we've heard; within a few hours, only about 20 percent.

Here are some approaches for deep listening.

1. Start with a ritual. At the beginning of our meeting, we lit a candle to signify that this was a time for focused attention. Some of us carried this practice home, using candle lighting to heighten the feeling of intimacy during a conversation with a child or partner.
2. Listen for understanding. Our group sat in a circle and one by one, we reported what we have learned from our spiritual practices about ourselves, the world, and God. We each tried to give our full attention to the speaker. We found it easier to do so when we were not distracted by planning what we were going to say (we did that beforehand) or by figuring out how we were going to respond (we had a no cross-talk, no comment rule). We agreed that we were not there to analyze, judge, or try to fix another's experience. Lindahl writes: "You do not have to agree with or believe anything that is said. Your job is to listen for understanding."
3. Listen and speak from your heart. We've learned in our group that we could describe our yearnings and admit our failings. We knew that our circle was a safe place for such honesty because the others were hearing us with open minds and loving hearts -- and perhaps most importantly, they were not going to evaluate what we said.
4. We also agreed not to comment outside the circle on the sharing — to outsiders or even among ourselves (this agreement of whether or not comments need to be



confidential should be decided ahead if the group is private).

This style of listening without comment is not always appropriate. Obviously, there are occasions when you need to be engaged in dialogue and your responses are expected. But try this approach to listening at least some of the time. Be truly present to the speaker. Don't be distracted by your plans, assumptions, judgments, or need to respond. Experience the deep communion that is possible as you deeply listen to another.

2. Classroom resource: <http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/deep-listening>

Deep Listening is a way of hearing in which we are fully present with what is happening in the moment without trying to control it or judge it. We let go of our inner clamoring and our usual assumptions and listen with respect for precisely what is being said. For listening to be effective, we require a contemplative mind: open, fresh, alert, attentive, calm, and receptive. We often do not have a clear concept of listening as an active process; we often see listening as a passive, static activity. In fact, listening and a contemplative mind is open and vibrant yet spacious, and it can be cultivated through instruction and practice.

As a classroom practice, deep listening requires that students witness their thoughts and emotions while maintaining focused attention on what they are hearing. It trains them to pay full attention to the sound of the words, while abandoning such habits as planning their next statement or interrupting the speaker. It is attentive rather than reactive listening. Such listening not only increases retention of material but encourages insight and the making of meaning.

In conversation, we are often so focused on projecting our opinions and defending our agenda that we fail to hear the voices of others. This tendency is why deep listening practices challenge the way we normally engage in conversation. Deep listening practices rely on a commitment to self-control and self-and-other-awareness.

3. General resource: [http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/what\\_is\\_deep\\_listening.html](http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/what_is_deep_listening.html)  
From "Slowing Down to the Speed of Love"

#### Author's Bio:

Joe Bailey is a licensed psychologist. For the past thirty years, his desire to understand the connection between the psychological, physical and spiritual facets of human beings has

pulled him into a deeper understanding of the whole person.

Deep listening occurs when your mind is quiet. Your thoughts are flowing rather than crowding your mind with distractions, interpretations, judgments, conclusions, or assumptions. Your mind is open, curious, interested -- as though you were hearing this person for the first time.

Deep listening applies not only to communication with another, but also to listening to ourselves and to life in general. The goal of deep listening is to hear beyond the words of the other person and yourself, to the essence of what the words and feelings are pointing to. Your mind and heart are joined in union -- you are listening wholeheartedly.

- Deep listening is listening intently and openly, we aren't analyzing or figuring out - - we are simply letting the feelings and sounds affect us.
- Deep listening is not defensive, argumentative, or intrusive. It is not about struggling to analyze or interpret. It is a purely receptive state of mind. In a state of deep listening, we realize our oneness.
- We realize that we are not separate, but truly one spirit -- we are connected.
- When we listen deeply, we let go of any beliefs we have about the other person.  
We let go of our prejudices and past memories of him or her.

The goal of deep listening is to be touched by the other person, embrace his or her story and truth, and to hear the essence of what he or she is saying. Deep listening is based on a feeling of respect. It stems from our natural empathy. It slows you down to the speed of love.

Preparation via Meditation:

- Try to sit stable and still, like a mountain. Be relaxed and alert.
- Listen to what you hear.
- Do not imagine, name, or analyze what you hear. Just listen with wide-open awareness.
- As thoughts, emotions, memories, associations arise in your mind, notice them, gently let them go, and return to the speaker.
- Radar that goes out looking for something and a satellite dish with a wide range just sits in the backyard, waiting. Be a satellite dish. Stay turned on and receive.
- If there are no sounds, listen, and rest in the silence.