



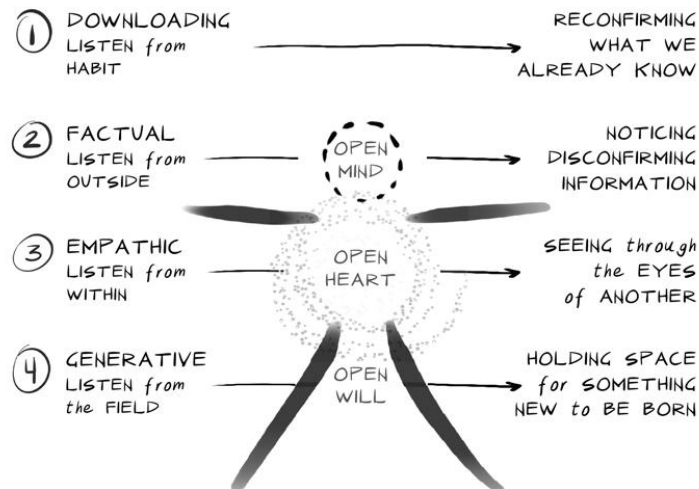
Building New World Capacities: Generative Listening

“Listening is probably the most underrated leadership skill...leaders are often unable to connect with and make sense of the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous) world around them. Changing how you listen means that you change how you experience relationships and the world.

And if you change that, you change EVERYTHING.”

Otto Scharmer, Theory U

In [Generative Dialogue Part 1](#), I shared Otto Scharmer’s suggestions for shifting through various “fields” of engagement with others. The diagram below illustrates Four Fields of Listening (Otto Scharmer [The Essentials of Theory U](#)) which facilitate and enable generative dialogue.



Four Fields of Listening
The Essentials of Theory U - www.ottoscharmer.com

Three Instruments of Inner Knowing

The heart of Theory U concerns the interior dimension of the “intervener” (Bill O’Brien, late CEO of Hanover Insurance). Another way to understand this is, *the success of our actions as change-makers does not depend on What we do or How we do it, but on the Inner Place from which we operate*. That is not to say that the *What* and the *How* do not matter, but simply that **our inner condition is the foundation for whether the *What* and the *How* will be successful**.

Three Instrumental Ways of Being* (*Ways of Being is phrasing by Bernadette Wesley)

- 1) **Open mind** - the capacity to suspend old habits of judgement (**curiosity**)
- 2) **Open heart** - the capacity to empathize and look at a situation through the eyes of someone else (**compassion**)
- 3) **Open will** - the capacity to “let go” of the old and “let come” the new (**courage**)

The Four Types of Listening

1) Downloading: Listening is limited to reconfirming what we already know. Nothing new penetrates our bubble.

2) Factual Listening: We let the data talk to us and notice disconfirming information. This requires the capacity to suspend our habits of judgement (open mind).

3) Empathic Listening: We see the situation through the eyes of another. This requires the capacity to use our feelings and our heart as an organ of tuning into another person's view (open heart).

4) Generative Listening: We listen for the highest future possibility to show up while holding space for something new to be born (open will).

How to Cross the Threshold From One Level of Listening to Another

From Level 1 to Level 2: Downloading → Factual Listening

Shift your attention from your own inner commentary (what you will say next) to what the person in front of you is saying (open up to what is being said).

From Level 2 to Level 3: Factual Listening → Empathic Listening

Step into the other person's perspective (ie: "Oh, I may not agree, but I can see how she sees the situation."). This is a shift from the intelligence of your head to the intelligence of your heart.

From Level 3 to Level 4: Empathic Listening → Generative Listening

Listen with openness to what is unknown and emerging, so that your listening becomes a "holding space" for bringing something new into reality that wants to be born.

3 Enemies on the Journey Toward Generative Listening and Co-creative Emergence* (*see [Generative Dialogue](#))

1) The Voice of Judgement (VoJ)** - *blocks the gate to the open mind.* **Suspending your voice of judgement** is the critical starting point in order to access the creative power of the open mind. (**Michael Ray, Stanford University)

2) The Voice of Cynicism (VoC) - *blocks the gate to the open heart.* This involves all acts of emotional distancing. We must be willing to put ourselves in a position of **true openness and vulnerability** toward another.

3) The Voice of Fear (VoF) - *blocks the gate to the open will.* Fear prevents us from letting go of what we have and who we are. It can show up as a fear of losing things, or being ostracized, or even the fear of something dying and must be dealt with in order to **hold the space for letting go of the old and welcoming the new.**

To learn more:

[Building New World Capacities: Generative Dialogue Part 1](#)

To receive implementation support:

bernadettewesley.com

Additional Resources: [Presencing Institute](#)