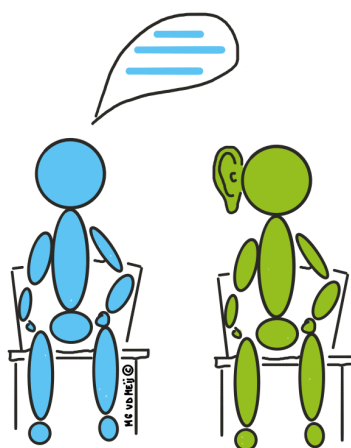


## SHORT EXERCISES

# Deep Listening



### In a nutshell

Deep listening builds on Theory U's principles of communication with the 'mind', 'hearth' and 'will' (Scharmer, 2016), and the self-monitoring of this (journaling). Especially the communication on the level of the 'will' helps actors of a transformative network to create connections between one another, as well as between themselves (their own drives and goals) and the (actions of the) transformative network.

### What for?

To work with my community on transforming the food system

### How long?

30-45 minutes

### For whom?

Facilitators, policy makers, researchers, businesses, funders, students, non-governmental/civil society organizations, professionals

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### Something to share?

Leave us a comment about this tool on [the platform](#).

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This tool was developed as part of FIT4FOOD2030 project, see this tool and others on the [FIT4FOOD2030 Knowledge Hub](#).

## What will you gain from this?

The objective of this exercise is to enhance familiarity with deep listening principles in a low-threshold manner. Deep listening helps actors of a transformative network to create connections between one another, as well as between themselves (their own drives and goals) and the (actions of the) transformative network. Thereby they invoke a personal engagement in transformation, and make people change makers in an intuitive and authentic manner.



## DEEP LISTENING

Creating a good connection between actors of a transformative network is essential to realizing true transformation in our surroundings through our actions (Theory U). One important tool for creating connections is 'deep listening'. Roughly speaking, four levels of listening can be identified in the interactions between people, of which the last level is the most beneficial to incite transformation<sup>1</sup>:

- **Downloading:** Listening from your own habits and to what you already know, in order to reconfirm this. We usually notice ourselves saying or thinking 'of course', 'right', and 'uh huh' in this level of listening.
- **Factual listening:** Noting new information that differs from what you already know/expect. This can be noticed when you think 'oh?', or 'really?'
- **Empathizing:** Listening from the other person's perspective and feeling an emotional connection. Key reactions on this level are 'aww, poor you!', or 'yeah, super nice!'.
- **Generative listening:** Connecting to an emerging future and possibilities that link to who you really are. On this level, excitement in terms of 'wow!' or new visions of the person you are talking with, or new visions of yourself, may arise.

The following exercise embraces the listening principles of Theory U and helps people to train in generative listening.



*Ricardo Annandale, sourced from Unsplash*

<sup>1</sup> Scharmer, C.O. 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Theory U*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. See also more on transformative change in Scharmer, C.O., and K. Kaufer. 2013. *Leading from the emerging future*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

## Thematic area

Transformation skills building

## Target audience

Facilitators, policy makers, researchers, businesses, funders, students, non-governmental/civil society organizations, professionals

## Age of participants

Ages 12 and onwards

## Number of participants

2 participants

## Prior knowledge required for participation

Basic knowledge of who your conversation partner is and why this conversation may be valuable for both participants

## GETTING PREPARED

### Set the scene

When preparing for this exercise, it is recommended that you find a quiet and comfortable place for your conversation. You may wish to look out upon a green space or out of a window so that both of you can gaze forward towards a point on the horizon. You may also want to bring along a writing utensil and a printed copy of the tool, as you will be prompted to fill out the listening self-observation template (see Appendix) after the conversation in order to monitor your listening skills.



*Margherita Turrin, sourced from Unsplash*

### Materials

- Copy of the listening self-observation template
- Pen or pencil

Coffee or other refreshments to create a comfortable atmosphere

# DEEP LISTENING EXERCISE

DURATION: 30-45 minutes

**1. Introduce the exercise and clarify any questions or doubts (5 minutes)**

*“The objective of this exercise is for both of us to practice our deep listening skills in a comfortable setting. By doing this exercise, we can help ourselves and others to form deeper connections and become change makers within transformative networks”.*

**2. Move to a suitable location**

Take your conversation partner to a comfortable place, such as a park or a cafe. You may want to sip tea or coffee while you talk to create a comfortable atmosphere. Seat yourselves next to each other and focus your gaze on scenery or a point on the horizon (so you both look forward rather than into each other's eyes).

**3. Converse and listen**

Engage in a conversation on ideas about your personal role in changing research and innovation on food and nutrition security. One party of the conversation takes the lead in speaking; after  $\pm 5$ -10 min the other person takes a turn to speak.

**4. Monitor and reflect**

Use the listening self-observation template (see Appendix) to monitor your listening skills. Repeat this exercise and monitor your listening once in a while. Try to train yourself towards generative listening in particular. You may notice a change over time in your questioning style as well.

## APPENDIX

# SELF OBSERVATION SHEET

IN YOUR LISTENING, HOW MUCH (%) DID YOU APPLY...

## DOWNLOADING

LISTENING FROM YOUR OWN HABITS  
" " WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW  
TO (RE-)CONFIRM " " " "

## FACTUAL LISTENING

NOTING NEW STUFF COMPARED TO WHAT  
you KNEW/EXPECTED

## EMPATHIZING

LISTENING FROM THE OTHER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE  
FEELING AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

## GENERATIVE LISTENING

CONNECTING TO AN EMERGING FUTURE /  
POSSIBILITIES THAT LINK TO WHO YOU REALLY ARE

[DERIVED FROM U-LAB, MIT]



Coordinated by:



## Partners



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