



Training for Intentional Listening, Ministry Overview

“Bringing Emotional Healing to the World, One Story at a Time”

Introduction:

Tova Kreps is a Christian counselor in Miami who specializes in helping people to overcome bad things that have happened in their lives (trauma work). After 20 years of professional counseling, and even more years of the Lord's training in her life, she is convinced of the need for people to acknowledge and tell others the stories in their lives, and especially to attend to the negative ones which plague them.

“Evidence strongly suggests that humans in all cultures come to cast their own identity in some sort of narrative form. We are inveterate storytellers” (Owen Flanagan of Duke University, a leading consciousness researcher, *Consciousness Reconsidered* 198). As Jesus well knew when he chose to teach in parables, listening to and telling stories (narrative) is a primary mode of learning for humans. It accesses the experiential aspects of the brain, and is essential for the emotional resolution of negative life events which are embedded in experiential details.

Because the skill and opportunity for listening rarely happens naturally in our society anymore, we need to create some artificial means for intentionally listening to each other (in addition to professional counseling). Just as we go to gyms or use personal trainers for exercise in a society with a lifestyle that no longer naturally walks or lifts, perhaps we need some "Listening Gyms"! Storytelling, listening, and the interpersonal connectedness that comes with such sharing is as essential to our emotional well being as exercise is to our physical health.

Intentional listening is a skill that can be learned, and can restore emotional health to individuals, increase interpersonal connectedness, and offer healing for unresolved emotional damage.

So, this fall Wellspring Counseling is offering her **course** here in Miami on Intentional Listening. The class is 8 sessions long and is titled, ***TIL We Listen***. Wellspring is inviting you, and anyone you know, to participate in the class. It is free and will be offered at Old Cutler Presbyterian Church on Wednesday evenings or Sunday mornings, beginning September 29th. A flyer with more information is available.

Wellspring also invites you to be a part of its long-term vision for ministry through participating in an **ongoing TIL Listening Ministry**, becoming a **Trained Listener**, or helping with **TIL mission work** in training Listeners overseas.

Vision for the Intentional Listening Ministry:

To motivate, inspire, and train people around the world to listen intentionally to each other's personal stories. Intentional listening can restore emotional health to individuals and communities, increase interpersonal connectedness, and offer healing for unresolved emotional damage.

Motivation:

"People don't attend to their painful stories... until they are safe enough and loved enough to face them, and until someone asks and is willing to listen. But... healing waits for the story to be told." Tova J. Kreps

1. Listening well is foundational to loving others well, which enables us to fulfill God's commandments to love God and to love others. Listening is an essential tool for loving others well. * See Scripture references attached below.
2. Although narratives are an integral part of the human learning experience, the skill, art and opportunity for listening has been lost in our society. But listening well is a skill that can be taught and learned.
3. Listening to and telling stories enhances a sense of empathy in a community, with the results of reducing isolation, loneliness, and depression; offering help to troubled individuals; and reducing interpersonal conflicts.
4. Despite the fact that training intentionally to others requires that a person "give" rather than receive, the listener is likely to receive some personal emotional healing in the process of the training and emotional satisfaction in the experience of listening.
5. Narrative is a primary mode of learning for humans as it accesses the experiential aspects of the brain. Attending to the experiential details of negative life events (particularly traumatic ones) is essential for the emotional resolution these events.
6. This ministry can offer training and a ministry vehicle to full-time Christian workers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) to bring emotional healing to the people they serve by utilizing the gifts of natural lay listeners. While professional, Christian counseling plays an important role in the Body of Christ, to bring emotional healing to people through intentional listening and professional skills, most Christians of the world do not have the means or opportunity to access good professional Christian counseling.

The Course – 'TIL We Listen

The *'TIL We Listen* class is taught by Tova Kreps, LCSW and Certified Trauma Specialist. A manual and DVD training are also in process.

The *Story Healing Guide* is a listening guide designed for two or more Trained Listeners to listen to one person (the "Story-Teller") narrate one particular negative/painful event in his/her life. The purpose of this time is for the Story-Teller to remember, tell and pray through this event so that it is shared in such a way that true healing and resolution are found. The Listeners are there to witness, guide, pray for and provide feedback to the person who went through this painful event. The Guide is designed to incorporate helpful elements of therapy, Biblical guidance, prayer, and trauma treatment into a structured, safe, intentional listening environment at a lay counseling level. The process typically takes about 1 hour.

Those who never intend to use the Guide itself as Trained Listeners in this ministry would still greatly benefit from watching and learning the process, since the effective elements of healing relate to any relationship in which one tries to love another well by listening intentionally.

Course Lessons:

- #1 The Power of Story in our Lives
- #2 The Effects of Negative Experiences and Trauma
- #3 The Resolution of Emotional Pain
- #4 Listening Skills Part 1 –
Cost, Empathy, Questions, Openness, Agendas, Other Centered, Staying in the Moment
- #5 Listening Skills Part 2 – Power-struggles, Communication Blocks, Trusting God
- #6 *Story Healing Guide* 1– Training Demonstration
- #7 *Story Healing Guide* 2 – Live Demonstration
- #8 *Story Healing Guide* 3 – Skill Practice

Ongoing TIL Listening Ministry (Locally or Overseas)

Regular follow up meetings (such as monthly on Sunday or Wednesday evenings) are recommended to maintain a TIL ministry after initial training. During these meetings, participants meet together for corporate worship and fellowship and then individuals divide into one of several types of small groups.

1. **Intentional Listening training.** A teacher/facilitator trains participants to love people through intentional listening (*TIL We Listen*, lessons 1-8).
2. **Trained Listeners Practice.** Groups of three persons practice using the *Story Healing Guide* with each other as either a Story-Teller or Listener in order to become Trained Listeners.
3. **Story Healing Groups.** Two Trained Listeners use the *Story Healing Guide* to meet with one individual to tell his/her story in order to find resolution about one negative event in his/her life.

Ideally, these meetings are incorporated into a regular “Healing Service” of a local church body providing at least two other types of small group opportunities during the meeting time.

4. Individual Prayer. Individuals meet with church leaders (pastors, elders, prayer warriors) for prayer for physical healing or God’s intervention in daily needs.
5. Individual Assistance. Individuals meet with church leaders (pastors, elders, prayer warriors) for help with current life problems, physical, practical or financial needs.

Local Ministry Opportunity – Become a Trained Listener

Interested, willing, and naturally gifted listeners are invited to continue training and practice to become a Trained Listener with TIL. Trained Listeners must complete the *TIL We Listen* course and then continue training through practice using the *Story Healing Guide*. If/when the person demonstrates a comfort level with their skills in using the *Guide*, they can be officially considered a TIL Trained Listener and participate as a Listener in the Ongoing TIL Ministry at Old Cutler Presbyterian Church or at their own local church or ministry programs.

Foreign Ministry Opportunity – Go on a TIL mission trip

TIL is planning to continue teaching Intentional Listening and lay trauma counseling for church leadership and full-time Christian workers overseas. There are tentative trips planned for 2011 for the Wellspring Counseling team to bring TIL to Rwanda (Feb.), Haiti (March), and Tanzania (July). Individuals interested in participating in this part of the ministry are invited to talk with Tova Kreps regarding their interests and potential contributions.

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*** Scripture References Regarding Loving and Listening, (NIV)**

Jesus commands us to love others.

- a. *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 22:37-40*
- b. *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." John 14:21*
- c. *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35*
- d. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12*
- e. *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. I John 3:23-24*

Listening to each other is a means of loving others.

- f. *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*
- g. *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry... James 1:19*
- h. *Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23*
- i. *An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest." Luke 9:46-48*
- j. *James 3:2-18*

God knows us by paying close attention to us, we must listen to know each other this well.

- k. *O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. Psalm 139:1-4*

Jesus himself, who knows all things, modeled questioning and listening skills:

- l. *"Why are you so afraid?" Matthew 8:26*
- m. *"Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts"?" Matthew 9:4*
- n. *"Why did you doubt? Matthew 14:31*
- o. *"But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Matthew 16:15*
- p. *"What do you think?" Matthew 18:12*
- q. *"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Matthew 19:17*

- r. *“What do you want me to do for you?” Matthew 20:32*
- s. *“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” Matthew 22:42*
- t. *“What were you arguing about on the road?” Mark 9:33*
- u. *“What is written in the law? How do you read it?” Luke 10:26*
- v. *“Do you want to get well?” John 5:6*
- w. *“Why are you trying to kill me?” John 7:19*
- x. *“Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” John 20:15*

Ancient wisdom encourages listening.

- y. *He who answers before listening— that is his folly and his shame. Proverbs 18:13*
- z. *A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word! Proverbs 15:23*
- aa. *A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Proverbs 25:11*
- bb. *A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue. Proverbs 11:12*
- cc. *A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. Proverbs 17:27-28*
- dd. *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21*
- ee. *Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone. Proverbs 25:15*
- ff. *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. Proverbs 12:25*
- gg. *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
- hh. *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.*
- ii. *The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.*
- jj. *The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. Proverbs 15:1-4*
- kk. *For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 1 Pet 3:10-11*
- ll. *When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment. Proverbs 10:19-21*