

# The 3 Cs of Radical Listening



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One day, I was having a conversation about the day's news with a friend. As I listened, he said something I found so appalling, wrong, and frustrating that, before I was able to think, my words of objection were out of my mouth. We stared at each other for a long moment and then he said, "Ok, no more of that topic" and, red-faced and agitated, I said, "yes, no more of that." And the conversation stopped.

We backed away from the conversation to avoid an argument, tension, hurt feelings, or a damaged relationship. But, in NOT having that conversation, we lost the opportunity to understand each other. We were left with only our own views of the topic and without the connection that can come with understanding.

All of us can choose an approach to challenging conversations that can result in more understanding and connection. Connected Realities, LLC uses an approach we call *Radical Listening*. In listening to the root of things, we are trying to understand what really matters to people beneath their opinions and actions. It can be a powerful and transformative tool for validating, acknowledging, understanding, and connecting with people. To practice this kind of listening, 3 things are required: **curiosity**, **courage**, and **consciousness**.

The word "radical" comes from the latin *radix*, meaning "root".

See page 2 for helpful hints for listening.

## Curiosity:

In a conversation, we have to want to know (and we have to assume we don't already know) what the other person has to say and what's underneath their opinions and actions. Think of it as a learning conversation in which the purpose is to hear and understand.

## Courage:

When we listen deeply, we find deeper things. Like deep sea fishing, the deeper you go, the more peculiar, tender, and poorly understood the creatures can get and you can never be sure WHAT you're going to dredge up. The Latin root of the word courage is *cor* which means heart. Listening with courage is about listening with the heart, no matter what comes up out of the murky water.

## Consciousness:

Even if we are genuinely curious and have summoned enough courage to look at whatever we find under the surface, our minds and bodies can still be hijacked by our emotions in the heat of a challenging conversation. It takes consciousness to notice that we are having an emotional reaction to something we've heard and to choose to keep our heads on straight, stay curious, and to listen instead of just reacting.

## To listen radically, try this:

- A. Enter in to the conversation with a desire to understand, not a desire to win or prove you are right.
- B. Practice good interactive listening: be present, give the speaker your attention, ask questions, be engaged.
- C. When the conversation gets heated, remind yourself: “Just listen.” You don’t have to be right. You don’t have to change anyone’s mind.
- D. Instead of arguing or rebutting, try telling your conversation partner, “I’d like to understand your opinion about that. Tell me more about where your opinion comes from.”
- E. Recognize that there is more under the surface than we can see. To explore under the surface, use the 3 magical phrases: “Help me understand”, “Tell me more.” and “What is important to you about that?”
- F. When you feel yourself having a strong physiological reaction to something in a conversation and need a moment to compose yourself, stop talking, take a few deep breaths, wait for the adrenaline to move through your body, and say “I notice I’m having a strong reaction to what you are saying, but I really want to hear what you have to say. Give me a moment and then let’s start again...”
- G. When you have listened well and have heard what has been said, paraphrase it back to your partner and let them tell you whether you’ve accurately understood them.

