

Flexible Listening

Using 6 Listening modes¹ in an Information exchange Contract

Workshop offered by Marjan Tuk op McCoCo 2011

Intro

When you would like to change your perspective on a challenge, have a problem with finding options or information for making plans or decisions, or simply would like to develop your thinking, you may want to use this info contract.

By switching between various listening modes, you can

- balance more effectively your feelings, thinking and will power in your balance of attention
- detect more easily the hidden opportunities in difficult and challenging situations
- develop more practical and effective ways of dealing with what life throws at you.

Group session

- At least 5 participants
- Each participant gets at least 20 minutes client time, including finishing time (5 minutes recommended).

Session steps

1. The worker agrees with the co-workers who is going to take up the Process-Facilitator and Note-taker roles (see 'Role Descriptions' below)
2. The worker clarifies his/her Confidentiality expectations
3. The worker introduces their issue to the co-workers
4. The group collects and shares information by questions and answers related to the 6 Listening colours
5. The worker: What is my Big Picture at the moment?
Is it complete? / Which Scenarios? / What could be my first steps? / How can the issue be redefined?
6. Finishing off the session: What was good about this session? What did I get out of it?
7. Coming out exercises.

Role Descriptions

The **Worker** is in charge. That means among others that the client can signal "Stop", "Slow down" so the co-workers know that the worker needs space to digest or direct the information.

The Worker brings in a personal problem, challenge or dilemma into the group session.

Co-workers open up their backpack of experience and knowledge to support the worker. Co-workers listen empathetically, can ask questions and give additional information (no advice and no sympathy!).

Session Confidentiality: The worker decides if it is OK for a co-worker to provide him or her with additional information after the session, such as suggestions, book titles or other resources. Before the co-worker actually refers back to the session, she or he checks out whether this is still OK with the worker. In any other way normal confidentiality applies.

When the co-worker contributes, they show one or more listening colour cards that reflect their listening intention.

- **A Note taker:** one co-worker makes a note of the answers of the worker.
When the worker is overwhelmed by a suggestion (question or information) or wishes to shelve it, the suggestion is going to be noted as well for future reference.
 - Resources as web addresses, book titles can be written on post-its and added to the notes.
- **A Process facilitator:** his or her role is
 - to support the client staying in charge of the information exchange
 - to keep an eye on the client having enough time to digest the information
 - to suggest the other co-workers to listen with a colour not yet or not often used
 - to monitor time.

¹ Inspired by Edward De Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats' book ISBN 9780316178310.

The Six Listening Colours

The six colours are referring to the 6 Listening modes. Together they produce an effective way of listening to move things forward. You use them in the order you wanted it.



White

Collecting Facts &
Verifying Information

Listen for and collecting facts and information and verifying it. The views of people not present are represented in a factual manner.

Participants make statements of fact, including identifying information that is lacking.



Yellow

Being Positive and
Optimistic

As listener you focus on dreams and identify potential benefits associated with an idea or issue.

You note the positive statements and facts that increase the likelihood of achieving the dream. This might include identifying the key supports available that will benefit the course of action. One is looking to create justified statements in favour of the idea or issue. The opposite of Yellow is Black.



Black

Being Cautious

The listener identifies barriers, unrealistic thinking, hazards, risks and other negative consequences from a rational perspective. This is critical thinking, looking for problems and assumptions that might undermine achievement.

If the Black Listening mode is applied too early it can kill off enthusiasm, creativity and options.

If the Black Listening mode is not included, serious problems can develop.



Red

Feelings, Emotions
& Intuition

As listener you focus on how positive and negative emotions, gut reaction and instinctive insights give direction to future decisions.

Red focuses on people's inner worlds and on what is emotionally important to them. While white is about in principle observable external world.

Red listening represents the feeling realm, black, white and yellow belong to thinking realm.



Green

New Ideas

In green the focus is on innovation, new ideas and identifying new possibilities. This can happen in several ways, listening to the ones coming up from the speaker and sharing the ones coming up from within.

Things are shared for the sake of seeing what they might mean for the issue, rather than to form a judgement.

More importantly, the listener focuses also on ways of creating new ideas, using many techniques for example provocation, brainstorming, and lateral thinking.



Blue

The Big Picture

The Blue listener looks for the Big Picture that is needed to move the issue at hand forward.

One of the things in this is designing thinking and listening processes that help with producing results. For instance, teaching fundamentals requires a Big Organisational and Facilitation Picture of a thinking, sharing and action process that is likely to produce trained co-counsellors.

Also the Blue listener looks for how the presently ongoing contribution fit into the Big Picture and what is needed in order to move things forward in a practical way.