



LISTENING & THE POWER OF FEELINGS

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As we move through life, we experience many hard feelings, including fear, deep pain and grief. These feelings are a natural and sacred part of life. However, they are often so big, intense, scary and heavy that it is impossible to feel them, and allow them to move through us, without the help of someone who can listen deeply to us. What I have learned in my life, and from my teachers, is that listening to one another is a critical part of being able to move through the intensity of what it means to be alive.

In this blog article, I want to talk about listening and the power of feelings. In our society today, not only do we witness and experience an incredible amount of violence, disconnection and loss, we have very little education around feeling and emotion. And we are also shamed for having feelings. Our most deep and challenging feelings are a part of what it means to be fully alive. When things hurt us deeply, moving through our feelings reconnects us to who we are and our relationship to all of life. They bring us to our soul, allow us to heal and also expand our capacity for joy.

Loving caring attention from another person can support us to feel. Our experience of being supported comes through that person's ability to listen to and stay present with the energy of the feeling we are experiencing. You may notice that with some people you feel more at ease being honest and expressing the truth of how you are doing and with others, it may not be very comfortable to show the truth of how you feel.

What if we could experience a kind of listening attention that is so loving, so present, so connected that it draws our feelings up and out of us in a way that is easy and even beautiful?

I have witnessed and learned to cultivate this quality of attention through working with drum rhythms as well as working with horses. These non-human spirits hold immense wisdom about listening and attention. People have worked with them for a long time to learn to listen to many dimensions of consciousness. I am honored to get to work with these spirits through my work, my own blood lineage and through my relationship to the horses in my life.

Through the New England Presenters Professional Development Fund, I received funding for a mentorship with Güliz Ünlü on more deeply perceiving and finding language for the subtle energetics within the listening partnership between me and my horse Angus. Angus and I teach about listening to, working with and honoring the subtle energy of emotion through my organization, the Embodied Leadership Project.

Receiving a loving quality of listening on a consistent basis is actually an initiation into the ability to perceive, flow with and relate to the energy of emotion rather than suppress it or repress it. Perceiving and relating to the energy of emotion is not something that can be learned intellectually. It must be learned through receiving listening attention. I am honored to both give and receive this kind of listening with Angus as well as offer this attention to others through my work.



When someone is together with you in your experience, connected to you and present with you, a container is created that can handle the immensity of your feelings, and as your feelings flow and move, they take your awareness to a more expansive understanding of yourself, your circumstance and your relationship to life.

It feels beautiful to get to live in the fullness of who we are, not having to silence aspects of our truth, our hearts and our souls as a strategy to survive an incredibly emotionally unsafe environment. I am passionate about sharing the beauty of an emotionally safe container through the way of the horse and the way of the drum.

This type of container is something that was decimated through the violence of colonization and enslavement. I often find in myself the idea, rooted in ableism, that healing my pain and trauma means getting to a point where I am no longer pushed to/past the point of breakdown by my deep feelings. That I should somehow be able to live in this world and be consistently balanced. But regularly pushing us to/past breakdown is exactly what deep feeling does, especially in experiences of oppression and isolation. And oppression shapes my reality, it shapes Angus' reality. It shapes so many being's reality. It is not helpful to live in this world while at the same time imagining that healing means getting past being totally and completely overwhelmed by devastation and incredible grief and pain. More helpful for me, is the idea that healing is a tangible level of loving connection and companionship that can honor and relate to the degree of horror that I experience in this journey of life. For me, healing is a container strong enough that my soul doesn't have to leave my body in order for me to bear my reality. I feel this possibility in strengthening my connection to the spirits and ancestors of nature, and I am humbled by the embodiment of this love in the spirit of the horse.

If you are interested in more about my work, please visit my website: www.embodiedleadershipproject.org



JAMILA JACKSON is a storyteller, dancer, poet and facilitator. Through her organization, The Embodied Leadership Project, she approaches the work of social justice, leadership and decolonization from an embodied, trauma-informed and ceremonial perspective.

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