

Session 2

Active Listening

Telling stories is an emotional connecting point for us. Stories reveal who we are and how we relate to others. The way we tell a story is as much revealing of what we believe about ourselves as it is about the circumstances. We talk to others, but also to ourselves. And some of our stories we have told, so often they sound as if we talk about another person.

The stories we hear in a biblical care session are usually told to us to provide understanding. So, we listen to take note of several different things.

What are we listening for?

1. The _____ of the story, the facts, and their interpretation of circumstances are all important parts of a person's story.
2. More importantly we note the story _____. Is the person in the story a victim (blaming, never take responsibility), a hero (I can do it, just give me some tips and hints), a charmer/schmoozer (it's all good), drama junky (adrenaline fix), a salesman (looking good), overly spiritualizing (God talk) and/or manipulator (addict?). How is it showing us how they see themselves, or want to be seen?
3. We also listen for _____ and look for body language and affect (facial expressions). Are they sad, angry (what's underneath the anger?), grandiose, do they talk with rapid pressured speech (driven anxiety), or talk slow, worn out, defeated?

Telling the same stories over and over can be part of processing grief – it helps us to make sense of our losses when they are not yet acceptable to us. So, we let people talk about their pain and we don't cut them off before they can finish. On the other hand, we have the right to set boundaries and not listen when it is not productive, such as someone who complains about the same thing but does not want to change. We start to feel that we are being used. We tell the difference between these two examples by the emotions we see and feel. How are you reacting to their story? What is your heart saying? Is the Holy Spirit prompting you with a word or picture?

4. Do not only listen for the negative alone, listen for _____ and healthy notions as well. Commend them for it. Make a big deal out of it. Pick up on hints which are dropped in passing. Little “red herrings.” They are usually unresolved issues that are major, but because they are unfinished and painful, they remain glossed over and repressed. So, we pick them up, “You mentioned your father’s birthday present in passing. What was that all about?”

Don’t take the bait by getting drawn in by setting their misconceptions straight. Telling is not teaching, and certainly not listening.

Silence can be very strategic. It is the power of not having to speak. People will break silence by confessing more, just to avoid the awkwardness of quiet.

It is useful at the end of their story to connect with God’s _____; “I wonder what God is up to in your story?”, “I wonder if there could be a different story, one that’s better”. (God usually has a better story for me than I could have scripted)

Role Play Focus: (Observe what you heard and saw)

- Pair up with someone.
- Scenario: Alex’s story with misconception.
- Listen for: Content, storyline, emotions, affect/appearance/body language, first impression/ follow up questions, and partner with the Holy Spirit.

Content: _____

Storyline: _____

Emotions: _____

Affect, appearance, body language: _____

First impression: _____

Follow up: _____

Follow-up questions:

Assuming this is the first session, should we give homework or suggest reading a book on father wounds? The sad reality is that most people don't read books any more. It would be better to refer him to a men's small group where the curriculum is about father wounds so he can learn how to talk about them.

Since the main issues is how to grieve well, the GriefShare support group would be a good first place to explore with him, as opposed to the father issues. The GriefShare curriculum deals with anger as well. There are several stages of grief, it is the task of the Care Team member to discern if people are stuck in a stage and help them to move out of it to the next one.

Make sure to ask people if they are comfortable that you pray with them. Look for opportunities where you can reinforce therapeutic/healing moments where we introduce deeper heart level comfort.