

For the Love of Listening

by Abby Rose

For as long as I can remember, I've been a listener.

As the youngest child in a family of five -- my closest sibling is seven years my senior -- I've never really been a part of the conversation. Now don't get me wrong, my parents and brothers have always given me the time of day, but I spent more of my childhood deciphering their grown-up conversations and concerns than speaking my own mind.

Because of this, I've had a knack for picking up on the little things and reading in between the lines.

As helpful as that skill has been in acquainting myself with strangers, delving into the personal problems of others, and seeking out truth amid all the noise, it has also primed me to draw my own conclusions based on what I hear.

I was never fully aware of how many expectations I harbored about others while I was listening to them until I was introduced to Monsoon and Benaifer's methodology. I realized that while listening to others, I was simultaneously writing my own story about their lives and not truly hearing what they had to say.

Once I was taught how to create a space for another person to speak into, the stories I heard began to change... as I **deepened** and **b r o a d e n e d** my listening, the narratives themselves became **deeper** and **b r o a d e r** as well.

My friends, family, and near strangers actually started to share parts of themselves that I had never seen before. Perhaps it was due to the fact that I was hearing more of what they were saying; maybe they genuinely began to say more about their thoughts. I think it was a little of both.

By entering a conversation without an agenda,

by not pressuring myself to react or respond to what I heard,

by purely listening to the person in front of me without judgement, my experience as a listener has changed completely

THROW OUT THE STORIES YOU'VE WRITTEN ABOUT OTHERS

The character you see in front of you is not a part of your life's play. They have their own script, you just can't read it.

DROP YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Anybody can surprise you, but only if you allow them to. No you do *not* know how their narrative will end, as much as you'd like to think you do.

LET SOMEONE ELSE DO THE TALKING

Every one of us has a story to tell. All we need is the right audience, the right place, and the right time. Do not treat every conversation you're a part of as the prelude to your own opinion.
