

Bryn Mawr's "L" Word:

“**L**istening”

by Sula Malina, '17

At Bryn Mawr, we're always talking about how we talk to each other. We learn to be politically correct, to keep in mind how our words affect others, to use the biggest, smartest words in class. But why don't we ever talk about how we listen? Monsoon and Benaifer's workshop of Two Women Talking made something incredibly clear to me—we *just don't listen* at Bryn Mawr. Or at least, we don't listen as well as we should.

The Identity Matters 360 has been all about listening in every sense of the word—from Two Women Talking, to the close listening between us and our partners at Camphill Village that allowed us to produce portraits of each other.

Take a moment and think about your bowl—the space you offer up when you agree to listen to someone. We all have a variety of bowls (shallow, deep, tall, wide), and we are offering up our biggest bowl when we are most ready to listen. When someone at Bryn Mawr is speaking to you, how often do you offer up your biggest bowl? How often are you 100% able to put a pause on work, social stress, and everything else going on, to make sure you are really hearing that person? I believe we do this hardly ever. I also believe that, very often, this is not the listener's fault. There are simply so many stressors placed on us by Bryn Mawr, academically and socially, that we very often cannot put everything down, even for a moment. And this is where the key of listening comes in—and it's actually the responsibility of both the speaker (to ask the question) and the listener (to answer honestly). All it takes is to ask:

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