June 2020
At the Heart of Wellness

The Importance of Listening

Rarely has it seemed more important to listen. We’ve all seen the protests that span the country and much of the globe. Many of us have seen similar protests before. If we want to stop seeing them, we need to start writing to them. But listening is difficult, not least when the voices we hear express criticism, frustration, and pain. That’s often an explanation for our unwillingness to listen, but never an excuse.

It’s unsurprising that protests of such force and urgency were sparked by the video of George Floyd’s murder. Our response to images is immediate and reflexive; listening is an active choice that we must make. That’s a problem. When only seeing is believing, belief is as fleeting as the images that provoke it. Many of the important things in our world are largely invisible; whether those are the struggles personal to us or the issues latent in our society. Why did it take that video to stir us? Did it really teach us anything we shouldn’t already have known? That we hadn’t already been told?

We are each unique in our experience and perspective. When we have the ability to learn from that alone, we enjoy only a limited understanding of the world around us. When we are able to learn from the experience and perspective of others, we are open to richer and more nuanced engagement with our lives and with one another. Listening is among the noblest expressions of our humanity, the gateway to compassion and the mechanism by which we become better and better informed.

We cannot see the future. When we imagine a future in which things improve, we mistakenly call that vision. A better word is promise, one that we make with our voice and witness with our ears, entreating one another to action or sometimes just to hope and faith. That’s what makes listening so crucial in this moment. The criticism, the frustration, the pain—these are the things to which we owe our witness, and taking constructive action is the cause to which we owe our promise. It’s the first hurdle to clear on the path to a better and more just world. It’s the first step on the path to healing.

On the path to a better and more just world. It’s the first step on the path to a better and more just world. It’s the first step on the path to healing.

Where will this urgent drive for justice take us? What role do each of us play in that ultimate direction? And with all the intensity, how do we thoughtfully sort through it to help move the world toward that promise of a better tomorrow?

One of my most cherished times is the nightly conversations around my family dinner table. My young adult children and their friends have been sharing their ideas and experiences and it’s been a true gift to learn and understand their perspective. Greg (my husband) and I have had to resist the urge to be in the know and adopt a posture of humility and openness. That’s not so easy at times! Viewing the world through our experiences – including our biases – known and unknown – is so very human. When challenged, our eggs kick in and say, “my value system is being questioned here – I’d better go into self-protection mode”. We dig in, defending, explaining, justifying and, ultimately, remain in the very place we began.

My life’s work, and the mission of McCall, is to invite others to be vulnerable in order to move through a change process toward healing. To put down those defenses that have served a purpose at one point but are no longer benefiting us. It’s hard work to resist going to those automatic thoughts and behaviors. To lean into our discomfort and ask what can we learn from it? To evolve is to be open, to listen, to honor another’s story and look for the slivers of light that transform and heal.

All my best,
Maria

Make a difference in someone’s life and support McCall today.

Our mission is to provide comprehensive integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment to help people lead healthier and more productive lives.

Your donation will directly support our prevention, recovery and community programs and help us provide clients with the support they need regardless of their ability to pay. Click here to donate today!

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Message from Maria

Dear friends;

In their new song March March, The Chicks (formerly The Dixie Chicks), highlight a sentiment many of us are feeling right now:

Lies are truth and truth is fiction
Everybody’s talking, who’s gonna listen?

Everything in our world has a sense of being amplified; sorrow, grief, hope, anger, fear and compassion. Every single aspect of our humanity is on parade, and it appears to have transitioned from a period of relative stillness to a frenetic, urgent drive to reckon with it all.

Where will this urgent drive for justice take us? What role do each of us play in that ultimate direction? And with all the intensity, how do we thoughtfully sort through it to help move the world toward that promise of a better tomorrow?

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