

*SOUL OF LEADERSHIP (SOL) DEVELOPMENT: MODELING THE WAY*

*A WAY OF BEING IN LANGUAGE*

By Art Parfitt and Karla Boyd



*“Listening is the rare happening among human beings. You can not listen to the word another is speaking if you are preoccupied with your appearance or with impressing the other or are trying to decide what you are going to say when the other stops talking, or are debating about whether or not what is being said is true or relevant or agreeable. Such matters have their place, but only after listening to the word as the word being uttered. Listening is a primitive art of love in which a person gives himself to another's world, making himself accessible and vulnerable to that world.”*

William Stringfellow

**LISTENING:**

SOL offers an in-depth model of the process of learning to deeply listen. SOL helps you discover your grace and strengths in listening to others as well as your stops and Achilles heel in understanding others. With the insight of your discoveries, you can then change the way you choose to listen to become a more powerful communicator.

Listening is an ever-present part of human interaction in the workplace. Our model provides a deeper and more effective way of listening that enhances communication and relationships. Listening is regarded as the core factor in communication and a powerful source in establishing trust, rapport and a sense of belonging. Listening is a way of honoring the person that you are listening to respectfully, quietly and with focus.

**LANGUAGE:**

Powerful leaders spend much of their time engaged in listening. Does the listening of leadership stimulate transformation and innovation, as well as enhance productivity and performance? Generally speaking, it does, when people feel that they have been “well” listened to. Having a voice and being appreciated causes people to want to contribute more. They are more engaged, work smarter and are more creative in a listening environment.

Our way of being enters a healthy relationship through the process of listening. This is a bold assertion but relationship is a coming together of self and other. When we are powerful listeners, we can create dynamic and lasting relationships. SOL Development provides experiential ontological engagement and process to help participants accomplish deeper and more rewarding ways of listening that enhance communication and relationships. SOL Development empowers people to remove the barriers from their listening and helps show them more dynamic ways of engaging others.

Equine-guided leadership listening is a daring immersion into learning to listen to the horse, learning as if one were a small child. This learning method is whole and not cut off from our source or the other to whom we are listening. The language we once learned as children is slowly eroded through education that teaches us to disconnect from listening to bodily and subtle non-verbal nuances. Horses have not forgotten this more integrated childlike way of listening and learning. They also expect to be heard in their language which demands a deeper return to our native way of listening.

*“We do not, as children, first enter into language by consciously studying the formalities of syntax and grammar or by memorizing the dictionary definitions of words, but rather by actively making sounds—by crying out in pain and laughing in joy, by squealing and playfully mimicking the surrounding soundscape, gradually entering through mimicry into the specific melodies of the local language, our resonant bodies slowly coming to echo the inflections and accents common to our locale and community.”*

*The Spell of the Senuous, by David Abrams*

Listening is an essential element in human interactions. Active ontological listening enhances communication. When listening is acknowledged, the speaker feels valued and appreciated. When listening is present, relationships and partnerships flourish. If listening is either absent or unacknowledged, connections become stressful and fall apart.

What gets accomplished on behalf of vision and leading change is shaped by how people do and do not use language. Through language we systematically create communication cultures among teams. Language causes an engagement with the world that calls best outcomes and generative realities into existence. People act from this generative reality and the meaning it has for them. Effective leadership, stewardship,

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organizations, empowerment and team building is strongly contingent upon how people use language. It is equally contingent on how willing they are to step into the new reality that they are co-creating with their team.

Speaking is a vital organizational practice. Speaking has many linguistic components that are put to use each day in conversation that create reality and let things move into action. Neuro Linguistic Programming, has long contributed to understanding how language shapes our realities. These linguistic ways of communication shape how we experience our world, feelings and state of mind. The vision and the goals that we accomplish are dependent on how much we are willing to powerfully communicate on behalf of the vision and world that we are calling into being.

Today most people do not consider how they use language, or how language casts a future which one steps into which may or may not be the future one wishes to call into being. When a desired future is called into being, people often don't know how they created it. When people become engaged in intentionally dynamic learning communication practices, they become more reliable for the relationships and futures that they want to create in the work place and in the world.

Most organizations have backgrounds and histories about themselves, stories that helped shape their culture. These background stories form the framework for how people perceive their organizations as well as what can or can't be accomplished or achieved. It is therefore important to regularly review these narratives as to whether they are positive and helpful, or have become negative or destructive. What history are you holding on to so dearly that it is blocking your vision or preventing change?

**EMOTION AND ATTITUDE:**

*The ability to manage your emotions is an essential leadership skill and responsibility. The best managers make the connection between negativity in the workplace and a negative balance sheet. To make the obvious and opposite point, according to Professor Barsade's 2007 study co-authored by Donald Gibson, who is an associate professor of management at the Dolan School of Business at Fairfield University: 'Expressing positive emotions and moods tends to enhance performance at individual, group and organizational levels.'*

*Checking Your Bad Mood at the Office Door by Sara Eckel*

As humans, we are all subject to fluctuating emotions and attitudes. Emotions and attitudes impact everything we do. If we ignore this impact we are choosing to communicate with less elegance and precision. We also can engage in bad business practices and practices that injure our projects and teams.

Being aware of emotions and attitudes is another vital organizational practice. Emotion and attitude can and should be identified and governed. The ability to shift them in ourselves and others is a valuable leadership skill. Emotions and attitudes shape the ways people behave and therefore have great power. In human

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interactions, listening, speaking and being fully present in conversations are required behaviors. It is impossible to disconnect emotions and attitudes from how we speak and listen.

Attitudes and emotions have not been seen as the core area for leadership development and organizational learning. The level of attention we need to give to how moods and feelings impact performance improvement, in most organizations, is lacking. Yet here they are, these attitudes of joy or ill will and emotions of happiness or negativity helping to build a positive upbeat organizational culture or tearing it down. Communicating positive attitudes and feelings creates positive futures that soar. Ill will, constant whining, and being a stop in the matter, demoralize the best of us and have a significant impact on performance.

While moods and emotions have not been considered a high priority in leadership development, they are critical to the use of language for effective communication, leadership and coaching. Emotions and moods are the framework through which we view organizational functionality. Recognizing the power and effect of moods and emotions allows us to:

- Understand that good leadership demands that we distinguish between fluctuating emotions and moods and states of consciousness that are in shift during inner growth.
- Shift from negative to positive moods and emotions.
- Engage in intentional and powerful emotional leadership.
- Work with moods and emotions to engage in powerful communication that improves relationships and partnerships.

### **ONTOLOGICAL COACHING: A POWERFUL, PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE IN COACHING**

Ontology is the study of being and SOL ontological coaching is about coaching a way of being, as a method of creating powerful shifts in perception, behavior and actions through every aspect of communication. Coaching to create these kinds of shifts impacts verbal and non-verbal communications alike. Being in SOL Development changes the way you relate with the world, your vision and partners.

Our way of being is, in actuality, the internal world that we live in, which especially includes the relationships we have with ourselves and others. Our way of being that was shaped by negative past conditioning and contaminates the way we would like to be in the world. It is from this internal reality that we form our perception of reality about the external world and how we participate in it.

A good ontological coach can help individuals question their perceptions of the external world. SOL Development empowers people to navigate through these shifts to become more authentically in the present with their own clear dynamic being. New shifts in one's way of being bring about exceptional partnerships most aligned with one's integrity. Way of being is the vibrant interaction among feelings, words and body language in everyone.