

## Session 1 – Listening exercises

How do we listen to ourselves and to others? What distinguishes listening from hearing? What does it bring us when we are listened to and what does it take to listen? In this session we start opening up these questions as a starting point and introduction to the seminar.

### Talking and Listening (25mins)

This exercise is about creating an experience of listening, being heard, thinking out loud without the listener having to respond in words.

Participants work in pairs. They take turns, one person first being the speaker/storyteller and the other the listener. They then swap over.

The speaker talks about some issues related to their work. It might be about issues they are concerned about, things they want to clarify for themselves, or would like to develop further or a dilemma to resolve.

It is important for both the listener and the storyteller to understand that there won't be any verbal response having shared the story. There won't be questions, suggestions, mirroring or any other kind of reaction after having heard the story. Even during listening the listener tries to find a way to keep the space open for the speaker, and a non-judgemental role for themselves, engaged but without intruding on the speaker's thinking.

### Preparation:

Facilitator explains the exercise.  
Participants find a partner and a quiet place in the room to sit together.  
The facilitator is the timekeeper

### *First round*

- the storyteller talks about an issue which comes to mind and tries to open thoughts around this topic a bit further. They keep going for approximately 7 min. The listener is just listening, no need for any response.
- after 7 min. the talking stops, the facilitator indicates this
- Both partners take a minute to relax and reflect silently. Important not to respond in any way.

### *Second round*

- partners swap roles and repeat the procedure.
- After 7 min. partners take a minute to reflect again.

After the second round partners then exchange what it is they take from the exercise, both from the perspective of having been a storyteller and a listener. What is important here is that each person responds solely to their personal experience rather than to the content of what the partner has been talking about.

### Solo playing and responding, in a circle (20mins)

A group of 6 to 8 participants with their instruments in a circle

1. 1 person begins with a short solo improvisation – 1 or 2mins
2. A 2<sup>nd</sup> person responds with a brief statement about a physical response (eg I feel some energy moving in my toes; my feet wanted to dance). This person then takes the next turn and offers a short improvisation on their instrument.

Continue until each participant has been the improviser and responder.

A brief reflection follows to voice what people experienced and got out of the session.

**A solo offer to a single listener, with additional group of witnesses (20mins)**

One person decides on some material they would like to offer – an improvisation, a piece, a poem...

The facilitator finds a listener to join them. The artist is invited to set up the room as they would like it, finding the place they will be in, the listener with them, and a place for the other witnesses.

The artist then makes their offer (up to 5mins)

The listener attends carefully, but without making a direct response

The artist then first expresses what has been meaningful for them. This is followed by reflections from the listener and then the other witnesses on their own experiences. Again the brief is not about direct feedback to the presenter.