

# LESSONS FROM THE OWL

By Eva Starr

**A**s I was raising my youngest daughter Shayna, who is now 19, I remember countless times when I was trying to explain to her some thing that I wanted her to do. She would then start giving me reasons why she should not comply, most often when she was a teenager, and all of a sudden the two of us would be talking at once. I would stop, wait a second or two, look at her, and quietly say, "What is happening here when two people are talking?" She would look at me while rolling her eyes and sarcastically say, "Then nobody is listening."

This was instilled in her from early on. From the moment she could talk, I explained to her the importance of listening to another without interrupting when they are speaking and why that was valuable. This type of communication, however, did not take place in the household I grew up in. When I was younger and would try to explain something to my mother, she started talking before I could finish. Nothing ever got solved and I felt I was not "heard."

I love the English language, which is why I'm a writer. I also love debating, but in a debate one person talks and the other one listens and vice versa. Can you imagine in the presidential debates if they didn't have a mediator to referee each candidate? The mediator ensures each candidate is given the opportunity to speak without interruption from the other one.

In today's society, we communicate with people every day, some of us more than others, depending on our jobs. In the next conversation you have, try to pay attention to how many people start talking before someone else has finished saying what he or she has to say. This is not only rude, but it sends a message that what you have to say is more important than the person who was talking, which invalidates their importance as a human being. Although this is done habitually, a majority of people are oblivious that it is happening.

It's rarely intentional; it's simply a matter of lack of awareness. In the Toastmasters group I belong to (a group

for improving your communication and leadership skills) there's a portion of the meeting where different functionaries evaluate certain roles and speeches at the meeting. The purpose for this is two-fold; first it develops your listening skills, second it provides constructive feedback to the person you're evaluating. It's amazing when you've been given a role specifically to listen for certain details and you begin to realize how important listening is in developing your inter-personal skills as a human being.

I wonder how often God tries talking to us, but we're so busy telling Him/Her what our plans are, that we're not listening to what God has to say. No wonder so many of us are walking this planet totally clueless. My understanding of our conversations with God is this: Prayer is when you talk to God, meditation is when you listen to God. It makes total sense to me. In the silence you listen, upon listening you hear the messages that God communicates to you from deep within.

## Listening as Art

Listening is a developed art, not something that you're born with. I'm certain there are a few of you who could share a story or two about the horrors of Internet dating. How many times did you sit there listening (or pretending to listen) to the other person go on and on about themselves without giving you a chance to get a word in edgewise? For those skilled in the art of listening, that, in itself, says something about the individual you're sitting with. Listening is different from hearing. It is in listening that you can uncover the hidden mysteries of the soul and learn a great deal more about the person you're with.

It was Einstein who said "If A equals success, then the formula is A equals X plus Y and Z, with X being work, Y play and Z keeping your mouth shut." Much can be learned from the above statement. This man is considered a genius. Let's heed Einstein's advice and spend more time listening and less time talking. Practice it today. I'm willing to bet the farm that you'd be amazed how often you want to put your two cents in before another is finished speaking.

Take the time to listen to a child, there's much wisdom there. Its innocence and vulnerability that hasn't been scarred by adults that lie behind the child's words. Take the time to listen to your significant other. Maybe, just maybe, they've been trying to communicate something to you for months that you just haven't heard because you haven't been listening. Take the time to listen to an elderly person who's close to making their transition, for truly you will hear crucial words of wisdom if you listen.

I would like to take the time here to thank Clyde Chafer, founder and publisher of "The Journey" magazine for giving me the opportunity to express my thoughts through the written word in "The Journey" for the last seven-plus years.



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My relocation to California has brought with it various new adventures and it is with bitter sweetness that at this time my pen travels to explore other literary worlds. Who knows what the future holds, you may just see my name in print within the pages of The Journey Magazine somewhere in time...

I want to thank you my dear readers for listening to me express my views and heartfelt feelings on these pages for so many years. I would like to leave you with these words of wisdom: "A wise old owl sat on an oak. The more he saw the less he spoke. The less he spoke the more he heard. Why aren't we like that wise old bird?" ~ Anonymous

*Eva Starr's spiritual journey has taken her coast-to-coast studying the various schools of thought. Starr's relocation to San Diego, CA has brought with it many new adventures. Continue to communicate with her via blog at evastarr.com & reachforthemoon.net Contact Eva at evastarr24@yahoo.com 440-930-8865 for speaking engagements.*

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