

Leaders and Listening

Carol McCall says 'leaders don't need followers, leaders need leaders. And it's all in your listening!'

a conversation with **Carol McCall Ph.D.**

5695 words | 18 pages

What projects are you currently working on, Carol?

I am currently working with 18 coaches in training, in Tel Aviv, Israel. I have calls with them throughout the week, starting at 2:30 am my time, working to bring this work worldwide, particularly to the Middle East. Specifically, to establish a 'listening' for peace in the Middle East. I'm much honored to be a part of that and to be able to work with 18 very powerful people who really see that vision and realize that listening, and this kind of work, is pivotal to the possibility of peace in the Middle East. That's one of my projects.

How did that come about?

I have been part of, and working with, the network marketing industry since 1990. In working with various people in that industry, people have talked about my work and what I do. They have requested I come in and do workshops for their organizations. In this particular case, there was a network marketing organization that I was working with, and one of the top leaders there said, "You need to contact Carol McCall; if you can't get her to come to Israel at least attend her course!"

I have 10 coaches-in-training in London, England. We have been together for the last three or four years. The woman from the network marketing company was their Events Coordinator and she came to the course I was holding in London. She was so empowered by that course that she went back to Israel and said, "We've got to have her over here!"

She proceeded to do some awesome marketing and promotion. In our first course we had 50 people come, out of that group we had approximately 10 people who said, "Look, I see the vision, we see that this is possible here in Israel." and they signed up for the Coach Training.

Since then we have had several courses there, with the largest group being 160 people. Now it's a once or twice a year event. People come to our courses and some of them join our training course. They are looking to do this work in an effort to truly promote peace in the Middle East. That's how it got started... she came, she saw... and she brought it to Israel

My purpose and mission is to have 200 million masterful listeners by the year 2020, so I have a lot to do by 2020. That is what I consider 'critical mass' and once we hit that, it's my theory that real listening will be a given, that people will be saying, thinking and feeling, "Of course we listen!". Whereas today people have an awareness level closer to "Yes, I know I need to improve my listening. I know I have to practice and I'm not doing it yet."

So my purpose is to have 200 million masterful listeners because I know, when people listen and truly hear other people, things shift.

I just did two workshops, back to back, here in the States where we had 70 women in one and 50 in the other. I just spoke to a husband yesterday, whose wife attended and he said, "I don't know what you did to her but whatever it was I'm sending her back to *everything*! She listens to me very differently."

Let me point out here, it wasn't that she was listening *to him* differently, she was listening *to herself* very differently. Out of that, out of *truly* listening to ourselves, we can extend that listening to other people.

How we listen to ourselves is how we listen to others, anyway.

What I do is make people aware of their automatic listening for themselves. And since this is your automatic listening for *you*, it's

automatically how you are listening to somebody else. And you can change that! You can change that within 72 hours. Of course, then you have to practice it. And it is a real shift.

Can you give us an example of how we listen for ourselves?

Okay, you might be listening to yourself in a variety of ways. One way might be with the stance of 'Yeah, well, I already know that.'

It's a common listening for yourself that shows up as, 'I've been there, done that'

If you have that listening for yourself, then you have limited yourself.

Just because you did something once and discovered it didn't work the way you wanted, doesn't mean it won't work if you try it again. And you've already placed a self-limiting cap on whatever it is you might want to achieve.

Instead of deciding that you tried it that way once and it didn't work, therefore it will never work, why not try it again in a different venue, do it again in a different setting, do it again in a different form, and see if it works? Most of us just blow it off with, 'been there, done that!' and I say, "No, you haven't. You've been there and you experienced it and something happened, but you didn't take it on again. You didn't see your potential in it. You didn't see your capability in it."

When someone gives you some information and it's coming from their experience and your listening for yourself is, "yes, I've been there and done that", realize that you are doing that to them too. You are cutting off support that could be coming from someone else for you. Also, it diminishes their ability to contribute to you.

When I am giving a workshop, this is not coming at people in lecture form. We do exercises, real physical exercises that people go through to *experience* their listening and then get feedback on it. It's based on the number/infinity sign 8 — what goes out comes back.

Very often, when we are in communication with someone, if they don't tell us what they are doing with it, there is an aspect to us that naturally starts to occur. I call it 'MSU'... we Make Stuff Up!

If I don't *know* what you did with what I did and said, I'm going to 'make up' what you did with what I did and said. In fact, I'm even going to finish your sentence for you because I've already made up what you did with what I said. However, *until you tell me* what you did with what I said, I'm in a state called angst. It's a low-level angst but it creates toxins in the body. At the end of the day I have a LOT of toxicity in my body because I've been going around all day finishing everybody's sentences, having NO idea what they did with mine.

If we were raised as children to 'hurryupandfinishwhatyouhavetosay', we will have a pretty fast clip to our speech
'becausewewanttohurryupbeforesomeoneshutsusoff' — versus, slowing down and listening to what someone is saying... including myself!

We are choosing our words very carefully to deliver the message. In a training setting, a 'listening' setting, I will ask people how they are hearing me, because feedback is very important. And it's a simple thing to ask, "What did you just hear?" Some people will respond by claiming they heard what I said and then speak back to me what they believe I said. If that *IS* what I said, then I delivered my message and, generally speaking, what they say is *not* what I said, they were making things up about what I said.

An example of that, and I use this in the course all of the time, is this:
My mother always used to ask me, "Carol, what did you do to your hair?"

She said this to me for 40 years. I *always* heard it as a negative criticism; I couldn't hear it any other way. On my 40th birthday, I had my hair fixed a certain way, and my mom said, "Carol, what did you do to your hair?"

I finally got the gall to say, "Mom, you've been asking me that ever since I've been here. What do you mean when you ask me what I did to my hair?"

She responded by saying, "You are so creative! I've loved the different hairstyles you wear. I've always enjoyed how you fix your hair. I just want to know what you did."

Well, I had been making up, all my life, that *my mother* was critical of my hair... because *I* was critical of my hair! I fix my hair different ways for several reasons. One, to hide the fact that I have very fine hair, two, it was never long enough and three, I don't think it ever looked good! So this question, 'what did you do to your hair', went through this filter called, I don't like my hair, it looks rotten no matter what I do. Her question fit right into that slot and that's how I heard it *for years*.

I heard it as a criticism because I was already criticizing me. This highlights the reality that whatever I'm doing to me, I'm going to do to you. So let's turn it around. Let's have what's called 'empowered listening'.

I am going to listen to you like I listen to me so I'm going to listen to me like I'm capable. Or I'm going to listen to me with respect, so what I say is respectful coming out of my mouth, therefore, I can listen to you with this same modicum of respect.

Now, I have some very smart people that come to my course and claim that they can listen to me and do several other things at the same time. My response is, "No, you can't." Because there is a wonderful principle in physics that says, "No two things can occupy the same space at the same time", so you can't do two things at the same time.

I don't care what anyone says about multitasking, you can only do one thing at a time. You just happen to have a series of things on your desk and you are doing one and then the other.

Listening is the same way. You cannot listen and do something else.

You can *hear* and do something else, but that's the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing means audibly you hear the noise; Listening means, 'I really got your message. I got what you meant.' And out of that I will directly respond to your message. If I didn't get your message I'm going to check and I'm going to respond to you respectfully.

Carol, do you ever find that when you listen to people that way, that you get an annoyed response? I'm thinking specifically of a conversation with my daughter. When I listen carefully to the words, and I respond to what I hear, she often comes back saying, "No, no, that's not what I meant. You *know* what I meant!" It seems to me that she's using words that are not really describing what is going on in her heart. How does listening fit in here?

There are two things going on here. One, she's listening to you as her father/a man. And women, females, are socialized in a way that has us listen to men a certain way. It's called "If you love me you'll read my mind. You should already know. I shouldn't have to explain myself." That is a female gender kind of listening.

And the second thing is the family dynamic. Because of the system called, 'the father', 'the patriarch', 'the authority', it becomes anxiety producing for the young woman to communicate with her older authority. It's a hierarchy and we're now dealing with two different components—one called 'family systems' and one called 'gender'. So you have a double whammy here.

All there is for you to do, as her father, when she says, "you *know* what I mean" is for you to tell her that you really *don't* know and you would really like to, then ask her to please explain again what she means.

But that's just the problem! That is the response I give her and it tends to frustrate her even more.

Yes, because there is a level of communication that she is *not* taking responsibility for in her communication.

It's up to you to say, "It is not my intention to frustrate you. It's not my intention to do any of the things going on with you, other than to understand. Right now I don't understand and I need you to talk to me until I do understand."

The thing is, you need to have this conversation without you becoming emotional. One thing that I have learned works well and surprises women, is to tell them you respect what they have to say. Women don't hear that very often. What we 'hear' in our socializing and conditioning is that we are not to be respected. *And that's not true*, and it is something that we hear, or I should say, something that we make-up.

Listen to the way women talk. We do what's called a take away, a diminishing association. We preface our sentences with things like, "I don't know if it will really matter but..." or we frequently use 'maybe', 'kind of' or 'I sort of think...' and by doing that we are setting the conversation up so we are *not* respected.

There is an article I keep in front of me. It's from a major magazine and it's about the 100 most powerful women. One of the things that is talked about in this article is that women do not speak up and they don't hold their conversation as important, as a contribution. And the women that are being noted as the 100 most powerful women typically *do* speak up. It is true that women who speak up and say what there is to say, after awhile they do achieve a certain level of respect in terms of their speaking. Men speak up, period. It's part of who they are as a male gender.

This is not about better and worse, they are just different. One of the comparisons that I offer in terms of the courses I teach, have to do with a respect for the gender differences. It goes beyond the obvious biological differences. The analogy that I use is that men, for women, are like a foreign country. They have a different currency, they have a different language, they have a different idea about gourmet food, a different governmental structure, different activities... all of that is different for women.

It's not better, just different. And how wonderful that there are ways to understand this foreign country! I go into the country with absolute respect because I don't know anything about it. Women will never *know* how it is to be a man. Because we are not one. And men will never *know* how it is to be a woman, because they are not one. That's fine!

We just need to start recognizing the differences and respect that and then communicate from that perspective.

Which means we have to listen to one another.

One of the comments I get in my women's course is, 'My husband does a better job of taking care of the dog than he does to me'. He pays attention to what the dog needs, when it wants to go out, when it needs water and so on.

After pointing out that the dog probably doesn't complain, I also point out that this serves as evidence that he pays attention. You just have to realize he's paying attention to you, too. And you haven't paid attention to *how* he pays attention to you. And vice versa...it becomes an equal formula. The important thing is that it's all in our listening! However I listen to myself, that's how I'm going to listen to you.

So the listening work is about starting to come from a

perspective of listening to one another with respect.

When I start listening to myself with respect, I listen to you with respect. And if I stop listening to you with respect it comes out of fear, something that I have made up and I'm really scared. When I'm scared I really can't listen. I can hear, however I'm hearing all of the patterns in my head that have me be scared about something.

Wow! How great would it be if we were also teaching our children about this information. Do little children listen better than grownups?

Yes! My little granddaughter would catch me not listening. When she was three or four, she would talk to me and I would look off to something else that was going on and she would take my face between her hands, pull me toward her and say, "Grandma Carol, you're not listening to me." She has really taught me!

When do we stop listening?

By five we have had enough exposure to the adult world to realize nobody is listening and so we figure out the system quickly. With the recognition that nobody is listening we start to tell ourselves that we have to do this, this and this... rather than to keep communicating until we are listened to. Because we are not listening, the child becomes like a broken record, they repeat and repeat and repeat their request until they get the yes, no or finally wear out as the result of being ignored.

So, by age five we stop listening and we do the best we can with very basic, and they are very, very basic, communication skills. Unfortunately they haven't progressed much in the past 2000 years. It's one of my missions for us to progress a LOT.

It's almost sounds like we knew how to listen and then we unlearned it. Would you say that's so?

I wouldn't say 'unlearned' I would say that we don't claim it. It's more like it gets covered over and now it's about reclaiming something we already know how to do. Listening is something we did in the uterus. As babies we learned about our world through listening, long before we learned to talk, we were listening to nuances.

So by age five we are pretty much asking ourselves, "what's the point?" and between five and twelve we develop our listening style, whatever that is going to be, but it's one where most people only hear, they don't *listen*.

Carol, are you developing listening disciples?

Yes and No. The no is because I don't like the word disciples because it seems to create some rigidity. I *am* training others to coach people around listening.

One of the things I emphasize in the listening work is that there are too many possibilities in terms of checking out the communication.

This is not a cookie cutter technology. What needs to happen is you must listen closely all the time and to each speaker differently, and even to the same speaker. For instance, how you speak to me today will not be the way you speak to me tomorrow. And I can't listen to you tomorrow the way I'm listening to you today, because we will not be the same people tomorrow. Today you may be inquisitive, tomorrow you may be uptight or focused on something else.

Carol, is it a perception? Where you start a conversation and then perceive how you are being listened to and then make adjustments?

I'll say yes, and it really isn't a perception per se. Because the word perception, to me, indicates to me that there is something logical about it. And listening, for me, isn't logical. Listening is a physical activity that happens in terms of energy.

There is a physical, energetic exchange that happens and I'm listening to the energetic exchange that's going on

***between us rather than logically
figuring out what the words you
are saying might mean.***

The words can often be a cover up to what is going on. If someone comes to me and they are speaking rapidly, at a clipped pace, I'm listening to that. There is a rapidity with which this person is speaking their words. I hear the words, but more so I hear the speed with which they are saying them. So something is going on with that communication and that's what I'm really listening to.

Now, I may stop the communication and ask about it. Are they in a hurry? Do they need to get complete quickly? I want to know what is going on. I'll ask because I don't know what's going on and I don't want to make up, for you, what is going on for you. So it's not logical in terms of me trying to figure it out. I'll ask.

People are often reluctant to ask. I make it a part of the training to assure that people check things out. "This is what I heard you say. Is that what you meant?" It's important to become at ease with that because people mean different things. There *is* something else going on. There's an energetic exchange.

So would you say that what is going on with that clipped pace is how the speaker listens to themselves? And are you saying that underlies everything?

Yes! And yes, it absolutely underlies everything. That's how come listening is beyond hearing. Hearing is the noise.

Carol, I simply have to share with you that through the work you do, I have come to the stunning discover of just how powerful authentic listening is by simply asking people for clarity. It has been so helpful to really see how I affected communication by making things up. I've found it so self-revealing that I want to stop the conversation and share it with the speaker but I suspect at that point, I have quit listening to them.

Actually, it's wonderful when you can listen to you without judgment, without criticism, without condemnation.

I had the opportunity to spend 17 days with the Dali Lama in one of his workshops which was absolutely awesome. And, he spoke in Tibetan and I understood everything he said. I do not speak Tibetan. It was really at the level at which he spoke. However that was not the piece, the piece that I got was how he was able to speak in a language that I don't even speak and yet he said,

"When you discover something about yourself, rejoice. You now have an opportunity for growth."

Now, here I'm paraphrasing but he said that most of us go around saying, "I should have done that! I should have known that!" And the point is... no, you should not. You *didn't* know it and now you do so get happy about it! Now you can grow. Now you've added something valuable to who you are and it enhances you. We don't usually go there and it would be valuable to do so.

In network marketing, naturally we have many dynamics going on that involve listening. This month, the theme of the magazine is dynamic leadership. How would you tie in listening with the role of leadership in network marketing?

Very good, that's one of my favorite topics. First of all, what I've experienced over the years, is that many of the leaders, listen to themselves as leaders coming from the aspect of *doing* something. For example, did they DO enough prospecting, do they HAVE a system, did they BRING x number of people into the organization? Supposedly that is the measurement of a leader.

My philosophy is that you are a leader when you *listen* to yourself as a leader, but what comprises a leader for you? What is your profile of yourself as a leader? Do you lead people or do you take lead *from* those people? Meaning *they* tell *you* how to best work with them. To me, that is the *best* definition of a leader.

***A leader is someone who asks,
"How do I best work with you?"
That is taking the lead, you tell
me how to lead you.***

That means you're a leader in your own right and I'm a leader in terms of, I've taken the lead that you've given me and we are going to work together in full cooperation.

If you can take the lead by asking how you can best work with someone, and then give some examples like, "Do I contact you once a week, or once a day or should I leave you alone? How do I best work with you?"

That is one part of my profile of a leader. Then you listen to yourself as a leader by exploring other qualities about yourself and how they fit with your idea of 'leader'. Am I compassionate? Am I truthful? Meaning, given what you've heard someone tell you about themselves and about how they would like to be worked with, can you be truthful with them about how to get them and keep them on track?

Many leaders think they are supposed to tell people what to do and how to do it effectively. Now, I know many leaders that are not that way but in my experience, in network marketing there are many considered leaders, who have a cookie cutter approach. I say you can't have a cookie cutter as a leader.

Just as leaders don't like being told what to do, neither do other people! So the question becomes, what is going to be your style as a leader?

***It's important for leaders in
network marketing to determine a
couple of things; One, what is
their communication style? Two,
what is their leadership style?
And finally, do the two match?***

If your communication style is telling the truth, 100% of the time, with compassion and with discernment... meaning timing. I don't expect a leader to just blurt out their opinion any time and any place. I'm not talking about being insensitive. I'm talking about telling the truth, authentically, with discernment.

It may be that there will be times when the person you are talking to simply can't hear it. When you're pointing out that they didn't achieve the numbers that they said they wanted you might be better off having the conversation early in the following month when you can refer back to where they were and brainstorm about what changes can be made to bring them closer to *their* goal, which in turn would serve the whole group.

I have leaders who will tell me that this is what they are doing. But then I have to ask, "If that's what you're doing then why is your organization having challenges? Why don't we have more leaders up there where you are?"

So it's really important to be aware of what kind of profile you are looking at.

For me, leaders have others becoming leaders at exactly the same level as themselves, in a certain length of time.

And it's all in our listening! I say, leaders are typically afraid to let people know that they are scared most of the time. They're scared about making it, they're scared about maintaining the levels they have achieved, they're scared they may be pushing people away. It's a constant thing that leaders live with all the time. I know it's a constant for me. I know, I own my own business and I'm a leader. When something seems like it won't go through the way I expected I admit, I'm scared. Once I tell the truth about that, then I can then let it go. The fear doesn't paralyze me. It's simply an emotion I'm experiencing at that time and it too shall pass.

When I don't express it, when I don't communicate it, I run the risk of paralysis. And if you don't like the word 'scared' then express it as concern or whatever, but express it... just don't dwell there. Communicate it, let it go and keep moving. I say enough leaders don't do that.

Leadership seminars are places where people can find out, really, how great you already are, they can provide training in areas where you need improvement, and if you are not always being trained, you are not always being coached, and leaders need constant coaching. Look at the president, he has a whole cabinet and is being coached all the time. We are no different and we need a cabinet, so to speak. I have six coaches and I've been doing this work a long time. How come six? Because I get caught up in my own quagmire called 'humanness'. So I need people to coach me through things and I'm smart enough to use them regularly.

I say leaders don't have enough coaches.

And when they don't, they get stagnant. They get stuck in their own listening style and they don't move and their people don't progress because they have, unknowingly, communicated and put a lid on the success of the people they bring into their organization.

Carol, are you essentially saying that leaders don't need followers?

They don't! Leaders need leaders.

Everyone that comes into your presence is going to teach you something. I had a woman who came to my seminar in Sedona. She floored me. I gave her a homework assignment. She was going to explore the male gender and we are trying to determine her communication style. So I told her to make a list of 25 men that she knows who she would like to interview. I told her this was going to cost her some money because she was going to have to take them out on a date. Something simple like, tea or coffee was just fine.

She said, "Oh, well, I'm in a committed relationship." And I said, "Oh... you are?" She came back and replied, "Yes I am so I can't do this

because I can't date anyone." And I said to her, "Well, if you are, know that he is *nowhere* in your communication!" He did not even show up in her communication. I had no idea that she was in a relationship. There was never a 'we', there was never a reference to a specific man. I was stunned because usually I can at least *hear* that you are in relationship simply out of the words you choose to use. But with her...nothing, zip, nada! So I asked her how long he had been in her life and she said four years.

She taught me a big lesson. And that lesson is that there is a whole other level of listening, a listening that is an absence of something.

I had picked up something but it had never occurred to me that it was an absence of her significant other. There was something missing... and what was missing was *him!*

You mean a listening by omission?

Yes! Listening by omission. Now, I can hear a *lie* by omission, but a person by omission? That was a totally new one. Out of all the people I have coached this was a first for me. I continue to learn. I don't know everything, I really don't... and that much I know.

Well thank you Carol! And going back to the beginning, where you shared with us that you were introduced to the group in Israel through someone in network marketing, I want to close by asking you, what is the best thing about network marketing for you?

The best thing about network marketing is the people and their willingness to grow, the willingness to stretch and go into areas with the possibility of materializing and actualizing your dreams. That's exciting! To me it's similar to being a top athlete going for the gold. There is something about the gutsiness and willingness of network marketers that's remarkable. They're entrepreneurs and I love entrepreneurs. They're a crazy group of people and that keeps me excited and inspired.

Network marketers embody, for me, that spirit of invincibility, and that just excites me.

I don't ever get bored with network marketers. I understand network marketing and network marketers as a genre and somebody is always coming up with some wonderful idea about something.

That keeps me stimulated and I'm ready. I want to know how you are thinking, how you're looking at things, what your approach is going to be and what you are bringing to the party, network marketers exemplify that so I hang in here. It's my pleasure and my love. A very exciting industry.



Carol McCall Ph.D., M.A., M.C.C., is the founder of The Institute for Global Listening and Communication. She has more than 40 years of experience as an educator, therapist, business executive and entrepreneur, and has impacted the lives of more than five million people through her workshops and public appearances, audio and book sales, corporate clients and performance coaching practice.

Dr. McCall is creator of *The Listening Course* and the *Possibility of Woman* and Life Development in Communication (LDCC) courses.

An established presence in the Network Marketing arena for 15 years, Carol is a contributing essayist in the book *Leadership in a New Era*, a featured expert in the e-book *We All Need a COACH*, and the author of *Listen, There's a World Waiting To Be Heard* and the *Empowerment of Listening* audio series. She has been the subject of national and international media coverage, including CNBC-Asia, *The Iyanla Show*, Clear Channel Radio Network, Success magazine, *Essence* magazine, plus numerous business trade and local newspaper articles.

A graduate of Northwestern University, Carol holds a Master's degree from San Jose State University and received her doctorate from Cambridge International University. She is a Master Certified Coach designation from the International Coaches Federation.

To learn more about Carol McCall, her schedule of courses and appearances and sign up for her ezine and see, visit her website here:

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