

"...and the end of all our exploring / will be to arrive where we started / and to know the place for the first time"
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

Listening is where we start as coaches. Deep and authentic listening is the single most powerful first step in dealing with the myriad challenges of Covid, and following the appalling death of George Floyd. This Guide reconnects with what we first learned, and suggests new resources to explore.

THE FOUNDATIONS

Already on our shelf, and worth revisiting, are Jenny Rogers' [*Coaching Skills*](#) (4th edition, Chapter 2); Anne Scoular's [*The FT Guide to Business Coaching*](#) (Chapter 5 in both 1st and 2nd editions); and Nancy Kline's [*Time to Think*](#) (every word.)

Also foundational is Zenger and Folkman's 2016 HBR article "[What great listeners actually do](#)"

ATTUNING OUR EARS

Tim Gallwey said 'Potential – interference = Performance: Po - i = Pe'. Although excellent coaches can apply their skill everywhere, the flow can be interrupted, or the client lose trust, if they have to stop and explain a commonly-understood term. To reduce interference, coaches in the legal sector are recommended Sally Dyson's [*The Real Deal*](#) and in professional services firms, Laura Empson's [*Leading Professionals: Power Politics and Prima Donnas*](#). For brief introductions, see Paul Fletcher on coaching in Private Equity, Peter Kilner on Japan, and Julian Stanley on Trade Unions, all in [*Meyler Campbell's 20 for 20*](#). For leadership paradigms across Europe see [*Cross-Cultural Coaching*](#).

Biases and assumptions skew our listening. Caroline Criado Perez' [*Invisible Women*](#) amasses such a powerful case for systemic data bias, that it may now be improper to coach women, or people of any gender making policy decisions, without having read it. There is no comparably transformational dataset to help us listen in the presence of racism (though the 25/26 July 2020 *FT Weekend* article, "[Race in America: Why Data Matters](#)" makes a powerful start) but the film "[Black Analysts Speak](#)" is data-based, and beautiful. For the DDM tool for listening, gender, and diversity, see Sheldon Daniel's chapter in [*The FT Guide to Business Coaching*](#). Otto Scharmer's "[U theory – slowing down to speed up](#)" requires (and details) major listening skills, and has been updated to support us tackling Covid and racism.

TED TALKS

TED has a dedicated playlist: [Talks To Help You Be A Better Listener](#), including Julian Treasure's [Five Ways To Listen Better](#), Ernesto Sirolli's [Want To Help Someone? Shut Up And Listen!](#) and Stanley McChrystal's [Listen, Learn ... Then Lead.](#) Elsewhere on TED is Tony Salvador's [The Listening Bias](#), with content on listening to understand, listening for the unspoken, and cognitive dissonance.

LISTENING & SILENCE

Quakers have understood the significance of just listening for centuries; see Jim Platts' [The Fruitful Use of Silence](#); and The Quaker & Business Group's [Quaker Business Method](#). (And did we mention Nancy Kline?!)

Some prefer more silence in their listening mix than others: see Susan Cain's book, [Quiet](#) and TED talk [The Power of Introverts](#).

And finally, Anthony Storr's [Solitude](#) gently encourages us to create the space to listen - to ourselves.