

The Art of Listening in a Healing Way

James E. Miller

Willowgreen Publishing, 2003.

Reviewer: Chaplain Grace Neudorf

Genre or Field of Study: Supportive Care

Summary, analysis, and thoughts:

Miller's experience as a minister, grief counselor, retreat and workshop leader, photographer, video producer and author of several books, is evident in the *Art of Listening in a Healing Way*, as Miller weaves together photos and relevant quotes from various sources to augment each perspective. The carer is invited to advance their skills as a compassionate, empathetic listener, emphasizing that each encounter is a creative endeavor.

In the context of seminary education, preaching courses are offered. But how about listening? Recall a moment when a friend listened to you. How did it feel in your body? In your heart? Consider a moment when you didn't feel heard as the other person shared from their own experience, "my mother also died of ____" or "I understand how you feel ...". Does the listener really understand? The reason I chose this book is that being a healing listener is part of who I am and what I do in my vocation as a Certified Spiritual Care Practitioner in supporting people through change, loss, and transition. In this book review, noticing how I am feeling and being in the present moment comprise two of twenty-seven perspectives that Miller offers in guiding the carer in being a healing listener.

Noticing my feelings helps me to be true to the purpose of being a healing listener. Miller indicates that "listening first to yourself is a thoughtful way to begin listening to another."¹ Listening to myself requires being mindful of the present moment. Am I feeling rushed or tired? Fearful? Excited? Paying attention to my feelings helps me to be attentive to another. Often people say to me, "Grace you must be SO busy at the hospital." My response is, "I am where I am supposed to be, in the present moment"; whether an encounter at an elevator or with a patient or staff member, I am in the 'here and now.'" Miller indicates that "bringing yourself into the now, and staying there, takes discipline... the more you intentionally center yourself in the present with the one who's speaking, the more these moments will be well-sensed, well-used, well-lived."²

¹ (Miller, 2003, p. 23)

² (Miller, 2003, p. 27)

Recommendation:

The variety of perspectives creates a patchwork quilt in the “art of being a healing listener” for a person working in a supportive role. What’s missing is a meditative or spiritual practice or reflection in the journey of becoming a healing listener. I recommend keeping this resource in your “book bag” as it continues to impact my professional and personal life in the creative endeavor of being a healing listener. My rating is five stars.