

The Compassionate Listening Project

*"An enemy is one whose story we have not heard."
Gene Knudsen-Hoffman*

What is Compassionate Listening?

Compassionate Listening (CL) is a foundational tool for reconciliation. Used effectively around the world to resolve conflict in widely varying circumstances at all levels: personal, community and international, CL breaks the cycles of misunderstanding and conflict building personal awareness and interpersonal skills.

By cutting through barriers of defense and mistrust, both the listener and those listened to can hear perspectives and feelings more clearly, allow room for different opinions, make more informed decisions, and better arrive at creative solutions.

At the heart of Compassionate Listening lies the belief that individuals have the potential to play a much more creative and significant role at all levels of reconciliation and community building efforts.

The Compassionate Listening model is based on the recognition that by truly listening, without reaction or judgment, we can see through masks of hostility and fear to our shared humanity. Listening is respectful a powerful way to make connection with others. It is also intelligent to deeply understand another person's perspective. It is a mind/heart approach, which opens interaction to deeper levels of understanding. Listening does not infer agreement. The listener does not advocate a point of view other than the wish to build bridges.

Compassionate Listening creates a strong force for building bridges of understanding, erasing the image of "the enemy", and for deep healing.

Five Core Practices of Compassionate Listening:

1. **Cultivating Compassion:** a willingness to connect even when not in agreement
2. **Developing the Fair Witness:** remaining neutral in conflicting situations
3. **Respecting Self and Others:** developing boundaries which protect yet include
4. **Listening with the Heart:** allow divergence and find a deeper point of connection
5. **Speaking from the Heart:** using language that reflects a healing intention

Participants often tell us they did not expect such a deeply personal, transformative experience, so we would like to be clear - while this is a skill-building workshop, participants put the skills to use immediately where they are challenged the most. What you take out of the workshop/practice has everything to do with what you bring - your personal needs and challenges.

Together we create a trusting and respectful experience, the heart-opening power of Compassionate Listening. We welcome people of all nationalities and backgrounds in our full trainings, ages 18 and over. For shorter formats, we welcome younger people as well.

The Compassionate Listening Project: Basic Principles

Compassionate ListeningSM finds its roots in many spiritual practices and cultural traditions, as well as conflict resolution techniques. It is interesting to note that many scientific principles support the theory behind Compassionate Listening. Here is a partial list of the principles on which the Compassionate Listening practice is based.

- Energy cannot be destroyed - only changed from one form to another (transduced).
- We can't save the world - the world is saving itself. We can align with those forces.
- For every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction.
- "A problem cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created it. A larger perspective or deeper understanding is needed." Albert Einstein
- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Conflicts recycle, often in another form, if the basic, underlying needs are not addressed.
- "There is a drive in living matter to perfect itself." Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Nobel Prize winning biologist.
- "Perhaps every act of violence comes from an unhealed wound." Gene Knudsen Hoffman
- Within each problem is the key to its resolution. Within each wound is a pure essence seeking expression.
- Follow each conflict to its source. The sources of interpersonal conflicts are often unmet inner needs, competition for limited resources, and/or conflicts of values.
- Everyone who is part of the problem needs to be part of the solution. Each person involved is part of the whole.
- Listening is accepting but not necessarily agreeing.
- The opposing view is always valuable. Look for underlying commonalities to build solutions of mutual benefit.
- Compassionate Listening is not about satisfying curiosity or problem solving. It is about being present to another.
- In resolving conflict, focus on the problem - not the person.
- Humans are more alike than not. All humans share the same needs for security, safety, belonging, love, approval and self-fulfillment. These human needs cut through cultural differences and become the basis for common ground.
- What we have not resolved within is projected on others.

Please visit the Compassionate Listening website at www.compassionatelistening.org for a wide range of services and activities the Compassionate Listening Project is engaged in.

Hwosch Productions has produced two films for the Compassionate Listening Project.
Children of Abraham and *Crossing the Lines*.

Children of Abraham

This beautiful documentary introduces the Compassionate Listening reconciliation model, and humanizes each Israeli and Palestinian portrayed. The film delivers a compelling message that conflict can be transformed through the simple act of listening.

The film follows the Jewish participants as they visit with and listen to Israelis and Palestinians – from leaders to refugees, and seek to understand the complexities of religious, political and human rights issues. Participants include Jewish leaders and professionals ranging from secular to observant.

“Children of Abraham compellingly documents the profound possibilities within a society in which friends and enemies alike attune themselves to the voice of the other. It should serve as an urgent reminder of how badly we transgress and how much we forfeit when we dismiss the power of listening as too simple. This is not a promotion of a naive quick fix, but rather a call to the wrenching but essential heroism that Jewish tradition says inheres in making one’s enemy into one’s friend.”
- Rabbi Gordon Tucker

Crossing the Lines

Our 1 1/2 hour-long film, *Crossing the Lines*, will bring you to a deeper, more compassionate level of understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The interviews with 15 Israelis and Palestinians were selected from over forty hours of footage from Compassionate Listening delegations. This video will expose you to a wide range of people and viewpoints and bring you into the hearts and minds of Israelis and Palestinians beyond the news media.

Crossing the Lines is perfect for the classroom, religious congregations, and peace and dialogue groups. It is an up-to-date companion to *Children of Abraham*. The video includes interviews with the following Israelis and Palestinians:

- **Father Elias Chacour**, Author, and Director, Mar Elias School
- **Judy Balint**, Israeli Author
- **Zoughbi al-Zoughbi**, Director, Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center
- **Sara Kaminker**, former Jerusalem City Planner
- **Rabbi Arik Ascherman**, Director, Rabbis for Human Rights
- **Daniel Seaman**, Director, Israeli Government Press Office
- **Salah Taamari**, Palestinian Legislative Council
- **Rabbi David Zeller**, Director, YAKAR; resident, Efrat
- **Dr. Sari Nusseibeh**, former P.L.O. Representative, Jerusalem; President, Al-Quds University
- **Rabbi Seth Mandell**, Father of Kobi Mandell, Takoa, West Bank
- **Hassan & Nardin Asleh**, Family of Asel Asleh – Seeds of Peace activist
- **Captain Peter Lerner**, Israel Defense Forces, West Bank
- **Devorah Brous**, founder, Bustan

Hisham Sharabati, Palestinian Journalist and human rights worker

“What an exceptionally honest search for truly diverse narratives of Palestinian and Israeli women and men in distress! Thank you for this up-to-date cross-section of the varied perceptions, deep feelings, and equal humanity of two fine peoples. This is it, for those who are looking for one film to better understand different sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.”

- Libby and Len Traubman, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group