

Four Levels of Listening (C. Otto Scharmer)

1. **Downloading** – “yeah, I know that already..” re-confirm what I already know. (I-in-ego/Politeness)

Listening from the assumption that you already know what is being said, therefore you listen only to confirm habitual judgments.

2. **Factual** – pick up new information...factual, debates, speak our mind (I-in-it/Debate)

Factual listening is when you pay attention to what is different, novel, or disquieting from what you already know.

3. **Empathic** – see something through another person’s eyes, I know exactly how you feel. Forget my own agenda (I-in-thou/Inquiry)

Empathic listening is when the speaker pays attention to the feelings of the speaker. It opens the listener and allows an experience of “standing in the other’s shoes” to take place. Attention shifts from the listener to the speaker, allowing for deep connection on multiple levels.

4. **Generative** – “I can’t explain what I just experienced” (I-in-now/Flow)

This deeper level of listening is difficult to express in linear language. It is a state of being in which everything slows down and inner wisdom is accessed. In group dynamics, it is called synergy. In interpersonal communication, it is described as oneness and flow.

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