Resource Guide: Generous Listening with the *On Being Ill* Podcast

Read before listening:

This activity asks you to "listen generously,"[1] or, to receive and respect what is being shared without needing to determine whether or not we, as listeners, feel it is true, worthy, valuable, or good. In generous listening, we listen to trust and accept that it is true *for the speaker*. The potential of generous listening is to re-train ourselves to listen not in wait for our turn to speak, but instead to make space for a non-judgemental, generously receptive response.

Prompts while listening:

Prompt 1

Listen to a 5-minute-long segment of the podcast during which a guest is describing a personal experience.

Prompt 2

Now, imagine the guest is a new friend whom you are trying to get to know. Be curious and try not to anticipate what they are going to say. Listen again.

Prompt 3

Now, imagine that the guest is a relative who has asked for your undivided attention. Be present as you would for someone who is counting on you to be there for them. Listen again.

Prompt 4

Now, imagine that the speaker is in the room with you. Close your eyes. Nod if that feels right. Put your hands to your heart if you're compelled to. Allow yourself to externalize any embodied responses that surface.

Prompt 5

Throughout this exercise, refrain from judgment. If you feel an urge to insert your own narrative into what you are hearing, remind yourself that right now, your only job is to listen and truly hear what is being shared.

Prompts after listening:

Take 2-3 minutes to reflect on your experience with generous listening.

- How did it feel to listen to hear what was most important to the speaker?
- When, if at all, did you notice yourself drifting towards judgements or busy listening and how did it feel to try to refocus on the speaker?
- How, if at all, did this feel different than the way you might normally listen to a story/patient/podcast?

We encourage you to record these reflections using an audio app on your phone. Using pen and paper or your computer to take notes would also work for this activity.

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[1]REMEN, RACHEL NAOMI. "Tending the spirit in cancer." Integrative Oncology (2009): 778.