

HEALTH IN HARMONY

RADICAL LISTENING

What is Radical Listening?

- Listening to a group with true recognition that they are the experts
- Process to find consensus solutions
- Accessing the greater wisdom in the whole
- Actually implementing those solutions
- Community governance and agency
- Reciprocity - a way for the world to say thank you

How is it different?

- Active Listening: the process of listening attentively to one individual — Radical listening is about doing this with a group to find collective wisdom and then actually implementing those solutions
- Participatory Methods: Focus on feedback on an existing solution. With Radical Listening the communities design the solutions themselves
- The World Bank's "Free Prior and Informed Consent": getting approval of a plan after it's already been designed and only required for Indigenous people





Health In Harmony

Overview of Steps

- Site Assessment (desktop research, site visits & soft radical listening)
- Radical Listening meetings with wider community to identify root causes of the problem and overarching solutions
- Design specific details of the overarching community solutions with leaders
- Signing reciprocity agreements
- Implementation

Assessment & Site Visit

- Desktop assessment following site criteria to decide if a first site visit is of value in assessing replication
- Meet with stakeholders and experts in the region to obtain information about forest threats and level of healthcare facilities
- Initial soft radical listening meetings with individuals or small groups: what are their unmet health and socio-economic needs?
- Meet with government agencies to gauge receptiveness
- Meet with potential partner NGOs and learn more about their work - partner organizations have to be conservation minded, community oriented and the flexibility to work within different systems



Western Cultural Bias

- Individual > group
- Accomplish task > relationship
- Faster is better
- Short-term thinking
- Meetings waste time
- Competitiveness is good
- Asking reveals weakness & ignorance

Why Radical Listening?

- Finding key fulcrums of change
- Gives agency to communities

The **how** might be more important than the **what**

- Yields solutions that are more likely to be implemented
- Efficient and effective
- Builds on behavior change data

"Truly seeking to know others "demands the open-mindedness with which one must look and listen, record in astonishment and wonder, that which one would not have been able to guess."

Margaret Meade

Technique: How?

- Receiving
- Emotions
- Listening to a group
- Interbeing

“This is listening as a martial art ... Contrary to popular opinion, listening is not a passive activity. It is the most active thing you can do.”

Chris Voss

Receiving

Presenting Yourself

- Culturally appropriate
- Be aware of wealth disparities
- Respectful attitude
- You are being watched from the moment you arrive

Techniques

- Listen to words, emotions, body language
- Focus
- Make small noises (hmm, yes, ah, I see)
- Mirror people's emotions (smile, frown, etc.)
- Open body posture
- Face speaker and not the translator
- Eye contact
- **Split Attention**

Practice Being a Good Receiver

- Groups of 3
- One speaker, one listener, one observer
- **Speaker** speaks for 1 minute
- **Listener** makes small noises (hmm, yes, ah, I see)
- **Observer** then **Speaker** gives feedback
- Rotate

"What do you see as the solutions so that you could live a more healthy and fulfilling life?"

Key Words

- Words with energy behind them
- Repeat exact words the speaker(s) used
- Emotionally charged words

Practice

Key Words

- Groups of 3
- One speaker, one listener, one observer
- **Speaker** speaks for 1 minute
- **Listener** reflects using keywords
- **Observer** then **Speaker** gives feedback
- Rotate

"What do you see as the solutions so that you could live a more in balance with your environment?"

Emotions

Key Questions in Emotions

Anger

What needs to be restored?

Sadness

What must be released?

Fear

What action must be taken?

Joy

What needs to be celebrated?

Managing Anger

- Anger shows people really care - express empathy

“I hear that you are really upset about this because your need for... is not being met.”

- Most oppositional people may become best allies
- Recognize mirrored emotions - they aren't yours

Practice Emotions

- Groups of 3
- One speaker, one listener, one observer
- **Speaker** acts out anger for 1 minute
- **Listener** listens (watches mirror neurons & don't get flooded)
- **Observer** then **speaker** gives feedback
- Rotate

Listening to a group

Structure

- 10-50 people
- Diverse as possible
- Leaders and both genders are critical
- Sit in a circle
- 1.5 - 2 hours
- Same level

Bias and Power Differentials

- Education not related to intelligence
- Respect everyone
- Be aware of cultural differences
- Race, gender, class power dynamics
- Gently encourage those with less power to speak

Women

- Emphasize women are experts at things men aren't
- Can gently call out women
- Might have to check afterwards to make sure nothing gets missed

Who should listen?

- Good listeners - not everyone is
- Non-threatening people - at least one woman
- One **international representative**

To indicate a wider audience and help people think more broadly

Hard for insiders not to have an opinion

- One **local representative** whose native language is the same

Working with translators

- Ideally someone who can do simultaneous translation
- Should be close to literal translation
- May need to ask more clarifying questions
- Ask the group to do so and demonstrate speaking in short phrases
- Keep track of who hasn't been translated if multiple people speak simultaneously

Location

- Comfortable & culturally appropriate
- Few distractions & interruptions
- Homes are good

Be aware host may feel entitled to a louder voice

- Neutral ground if conflict in the community

Process

- Short introduction
- Facilitator asks open-ended question then is quiet
- Silence is OK
- Do not interrupt
- Phones on silent
- Let the conversation go where it needs to go

The Question

- Framing is important
- Leverage positive emotions
- Personalize and humanize
- Harness reciprocity

Example 1:

“What would you need as a thank you from the world community so you could protect this precious ecosystem?”

Example 2:

“What do you see as the solutions to fix this problem so that we can better achieve our mission?”

Documentation

- Notes on paper
 - 2 people
 - No names
- No whiteboard
 - Literacy
 - Power Issues
 - Requires you to stand up

Avoid Leading Questions

Examples:

“Don’t you think this would be a good idea?”

“It seems to me that your real problems are actually this...”

“If that was my experience, I would feel this way.”

Resonance

- Web of conversation forming & breaking
- Group body language
- Energy drop when group coalesces around an idea



Reflecting

- Reflect

Use key words & resonance areas

“Am I understanding correctly that a major problem is X and Z might be a good solution? Does everyone agree with that?”

- Allow time for discussion
- Consensus is best

Hold-outs may have a critical point the group needs to consider

Clarifying

- Ask questions if things are unclear

“Can someone explain to me why this is a good solution?”

Ask for examples

Summarizing

- “So what we heard today is that the group thinks the best solutions are X, X, and X.”
- “Keep summarizing until everyone says, “That’s right.”
- Doesn’t include everything said
- Express hope
- Never make promises you can’t keep
- Make follow-up plan

Practice

Listening to a Group

- Groups of 9
- 8 in a circle
- 1 observer outside circle
- 2 listeners with notebook
- 6 group participants
- One **listener** asks a question
- **Speakers** speak for 7 minutes
- After 7 minutes, listeners consult briefly and reflect back key words and themes to group

"What do you need from the world so that you could protect your local environment?"

Questions for Listeners

- Looking at **body language**, who was engaged and who wasn't?
- How were people sitting and moving and what does that tell you?
- Were there moments when the whole group had similar body language?
- What did you notice by looking into people's eyes?
- What did you notice about people's tone of voice?

Feedback

- **Observer** provides feedback to listeners
- **Speakers** provide feedback to listeners

Receiving body posture

Use of key words

Reflection

Summarizing

Designing Solutions

Work out details of solutions with leaders

This meeting is a negotiation process on exactly how the broad community solutions will be implemented. We negotiate details of the solutions brought up during the Radical Listening sessions with the community leaders and find out what works best taking into consideration resources available to the organization and community needs.

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the solutions brought up during the Radical Listening sessions
- Invite village leaders and encourage community to also send a woman to represent women's needs

Team Structure

- One person representing the organization (ideally same person that also attended Radical Listening meetings)
- One local representative
- Translator (if needed)

Meeting Structure

- Summarize findings of solutions brought up during Radical Listening meetings
- Negotiate details of the solutions brought up and start negotiation process
- Introduction of Incentive System for healthcare
- Introduction and input for non-cash payment system

Reciprocity Agreements

Signing Reciprocity Agreements

The goal of this meeting is to develop and sign a reciprocity agreement with the community leaders. Through the incentive system community leaders agree to try to protect the forest in return for the implementation of the agreed upon solutions.

Meeting Structure

- Discuss agreement with village leaders that was designed based on the previous meeting and read the agreement out loud
 - Gather feedback and make adjustments where needed
 - Signing of the agreement by leader representatives from the community
- If village leaders are not ready to sign the agreement we can approach them at a later point in time or they can approach the organization
- Celebrate the signing of the agreement around an event or a ritual appropriate in the culture (as identified by the communities)

Implementation

Implementation

- Informed by the Radical Listening sessions we will work with the communities to successfully implement the solutions they identified.
- Program implementation can start once the radical listening sessions are conducted, the details are worked out with community leaders, the reciprocity agreements are signed, and the baseline survey is conducted
- As adjustments are needed convene community groups and/or leaders to have them design further solutions as needed (example: now there isn't enough manure)

Implementation

- Radical Listening is a process and as solutions are implemented, new unexpected problems may arise
- All staff need to be trained in the philosophy and skills of Radical Listening
- We encourage clear communication and collaboration with all relevant government authorities who may also be able to help meet needs once they know what these needs are

Interbeing

"We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption – what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it."

Wendell Berry

The Secret of Caring is Caring

- Genuine interest & curiosity
- Always be truthful – admit you don't know
- Respect
- Humility
- Recognizing intertwined well-being
- Your comfort impacts other's comfort

Interbeing Practice

Adapted from Joana Macy's "Learning to see each other" practice

You're out in the world, moving around. You're moving quickly, your eyes are down. Change directions. It is the middle of a long week, you are tired and harried. Now gradually slow your pace. And lift your eyes ever so slightly. Using your soft focus, notice that you are not alone. There are others on this journey of life with you. Beautifully complex beings, wonderful people!

Begin now to make eye contact, ever so briefly with these people as you pass them. And, if you dare, maybe even risk a smile.

Stop in front of Person #1

Now, you find yourself standing still in front of one other. You can look at each other in the eyes. Or if that is uncomfortable, close your eyes and simply sense the one who is standing before you. Rest into your breathing for just a few moments. This person is unique. There has never ever been a person just like this. Nor will there ever be. In this person there are gifts and powers, strengths, promises and potentials of which they themselves may not be fully aware. There is keen intelligence. There is compassion. Great reserves of wit, wisdom, patience, endurance, ingenuity. Capacities for attention and analysis, observance, quick response. Think what it would mean for your world if these powers were accessed and trusted and put out there for the benefit of all creation.

And when you think how good that would be, you feel how strongly you desire that this person be fully themselves and free from all the causes of suffering. This is: The Great Loving Kindness. And so you acknowledge this beautiful person standing in front of you ... and you take your leave.

You are out and about in the world again. You are still moving fairly quickly. But this time you have a bit more awareness of those journeying with you. You make occasional eye contact...

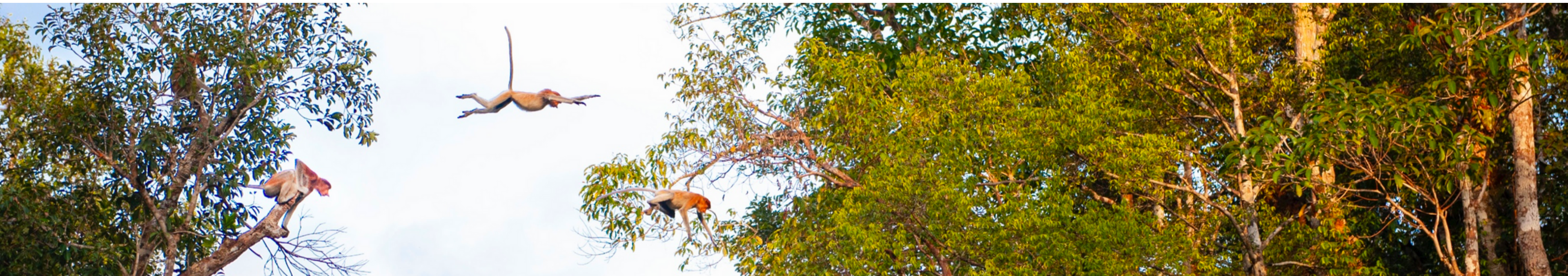
Stop in front of Person #2

Now, you find yourself again in front of one other. Rest into your breathing and into the presence of this person, as feels comfortable. As in all human lives, there is pain in the life of the person before you. Open your awareness to this pain – rejection, disappointment, failure, loneliness, loss, fear... There have been hurts that go a long way back, that may have never been spoken, carving a place in the heart that can open now to the suffering of our world. You cannot fix this pain, but you can be unafraid to be with the pain of another.

This is: The Great Compassion. Acknowledge this person standing in front of you ... and you take your leave. And you're out in the world again, and moving around. And you're using all the space. Change directions, move upstream. This is your life and you are attentive to your work. But you also are awakened to the beauty and pain in other members of your community. You move a little slower. You actively seek non-verbal connection with those around you.

Circle

Now, you find yourself standing still in a circle with your fellow travelers in life. Rest into your breathing. Look around the circle, making eye contact if that is comfortable... Now close your eyes. Let your consciousness sink deep within you, below you, below the level that words can express. I invite you to feel into the inter-connectivity of all, the non-separateness of all, the great truth of our InterBeing. Out of this web you cannot fall. You know that there is no cowardice or stupidity or failing that could ever sever you from that web. So, you rest into that knowing. And this is The Great Peace - out of which you can act, you can risk everything and let every encounter be a homecoming to your true nature. Honor the Light within you. Honor the Light within those with whom you journey.



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