

Active Listening as a way of life.

Carl Rogers coined the term “active listening” in 1957

By focusing on and validating another person’s perspective, active listening helps build empathy.

Simultaneously, this focused, empathic process strengthens the Pre Frontal Cortex (PFC)’s role in reasoning and emotion regulation while also diminishing the amygdala’s “fight-or-flight” response, creating a calm awareness.



Active listening allows for a shared understanding of another person's thoughts and feelings, which builds empathy and validates their experience.

This can help calm the amygdala.



However..

in ***authoritarian*** trained brains,
the same region of the brain
(with overlapping neurological pathways)
activates for a completely
different purpose:

 **DISGUST** 



Innate Foundation:

Disgust is an innate, natural, instinctual emotion, which can be profoundly shaped, trained, and exploited into what *appears* to be “normalized” attitudes and behaviors, including violence, domination and grandiosity.

Disgust is considered one of the six basic, universal emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust) with a strong evolutionary basis, often linked to a “behavioral immune system”.

Its primary function is to avoid spoiled food.



Social Conditioning

Social conditioning can effectively use the brain's emotional pathways, specifically involving the insula and the amygdala, to promote negative emotions like disgust and anger towards out-groups.

These mechanisms exploit the brain's fundamental wiring for survival and social interaction, manipulating them to foster prejudice and intergroup hostility.



Social Dynamics:

Psychological theories of in-group bias and the scapegoating of out-groups stem from defense mechanisms like reaction formation and underlying inferiority complexes in the IN-GROUP members.

Inferiority Complex:

Coined by psychologist Alfred Adler, this refers to a person's feelings that they lack worth or are not good enough. When this feeling is shared among group members, it can create a collective sense of inadequacy.



Reaction Formation:

This is a defense mechanism where a person consciously feels and acts in a way that is the exact opposite of their unconscious feelings. To deal with deep-seated feelings of inferiority, a group might unconsciously adopt an air of superiority and arrogance.



Projection and Scapegoating:

The perceived inferiority is then often “projected” onto other, more vulnerable groups (out-groups). These out-groups are then made into scapegoats, blamed for problems or viewed as inferior, which serves to validate the in-group’s fragile sense of superiority and distract from its own insecurities.

In this framework, the aggressive and exclusionary behaviors of the in-group are not a true reflection of genuine strength or superiority, but rather a defensive, often unconscious, reaction to feelings of weakness or inadequacy. This dynamic is frequently discussed in analyses of prejudice, discrimination, and group conflict.



On an individual level, healing strategies include:

Developing self-awareness: Practices like mindfulness can help individuals perceive and witness their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, rather than being **ruled** by them.

Finding safe spaces: Processing emotional pain requires a safe environment, whether through talking with a trusted friend, support group, or Empathy Circles.



Creating a new narrative: By exploring and sharing one's trauma story, it becomes less upsetting. This can happen through writing or speaking with trusted individuals.

Practicing self-regulation: Techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and physical activity can help regulate the nervous system and calm the "fight, flight, or freeze" response.

Active Choice: Individuals can choose to break the cycle by seeking healing, forgiveness, and a living relationship with Self, thereby creating a different path for their own and future generations.



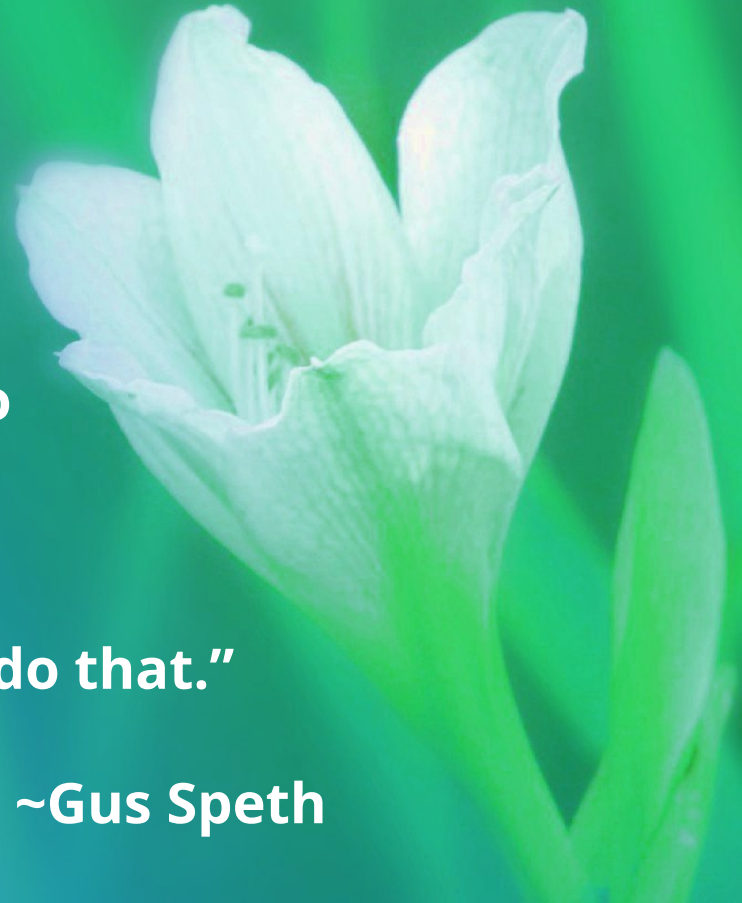
“ I used to think that top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change.

I thought that with 30 years of good science, we could address these problems, but I was wrong.

The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these, we need a spiritual and cultural transformation.

And we scientists don't know how to do that.”

~Gus Speth



Thank you!

EmpathyMatters.org



Thank you!



Thank you!

Thank you!



Thank you!