

Reflective Listening Buddies Practice

The privileged environment ([read Cheri's blog](#)) is the cornerstone of our practice. It provides the compassionate space, opportunity, and support for us to practice being present. We practice turning our attention inward to whatever is arising for us in the circumstances of each moment. The guidelines and program requirements below help maintain the privileged environment so that we can practice pure reflective listening and presence.

Program Elements

- The program lasts for a quarter.
- You have one partner for the entire quarter.
- You are requested not to do reflective listening calls outside of the program.
- A training call is offered prior to each quarter. All participants are invited to bring questions for clarification to the call, but it is required ONLY for people joining the program for the very first time.
- Commitment to attending one Support Call per quarter. It is up to you to take responsibility for your own attendance and practice.

Program Logistics

Scheduling Calls

- After receiving your buddy assignment from your facilitator, please email your partner within one week to arrange a call time.
- Do your best to schedule the call for the same time each week. This will minimize communication required for scheduling.
- Your call time is a practice opportunity to be fully present for you and your partner. Avoid scheduling a call when you are traveling or commuting.
- Please decide who will place the first call via email. The recommendation is to alternate each week to initiate the call. The caller will speak first.

Call Structure

- Each call will be 30 minutes.
- The call is divided into two 15 minutes sections.
- Partners will alternate weekly being the one to initiate the call.
- The person who places the call is the first speaker.
- The person reflecting monitors the time, but it is helpful for both speaker and reflector to keep the time in awareness. Setting a timer is recommended.
- After 15 minutes, the other person will speak and you will reflect.
- If the designated speaker stops speaking before their time is up, maintain silence until the 15 minutes are over and then switch roles.

During the Call

- Please do not engage in social conversation or chit-chat.
- Please refrain from conversation unrelated to reflective listening.
- Use email to work out any logistical or scheduling questions.
- End the call if you feel the privileged environment is being compromised in an uncomfortable manner.

Rescheduling or Cancelling Calls

An important element of Reflective Listening practice is the commitment to show up for the calls. Keeping this commitment not only assists our own practice but supports someone else in Sangha with theirs. Missed or canceled calls are missed or canceled commitments. Life intervenes but the intent is to show up for others.

If the person placing the call is more than 5 minutes late, please do not place the call. And if the person receiving the call doesn't answer after the first call, please do not place subsequent calls. In both cases, it is considered a missed call.

Missed Calls

- Do not reschedule a missed or forgotten call. Resume the schedule the following week. This would mean if person A was scheduled to place the call that was missed, person B would still place the call the following week.
- If you have any difficulty connecting with your buddy, either at the beginning of the quarter or throughout the quarter, the guidance is to communicate this to your facilitator -- sooner rather than later. Do not let the voices talk you out of communicating; timely communication enhances the program for all!
- Communicate with your buddy as soon as one of you is aware that a call has been missed. It's fine to send a brief email or text acknowledging the missed call and confirming when the next call will take place and who will be placing the call. The email would be simple, such as, " I want to acknowledge that we missed our call today and confirm that our next call will be x date, x time, and it is my/your turn to place the call."

****Note:** if a call is missed, it does not change the order of who places the call. The rotation would continue as if the call had not been missed.

Canceled Calls

- If you need to cancel or reschedule a call, please give your partner ample notice (minimum 24 hours).
- You may text or email your partner to cancel or reschedule a call.
- Notify your facilitator if you will be unavailable for 3 or more weeks of the quarter so that a substitute buddy can fill in during your absence.
- If you feel that you are not getting the full benefit of the program because of a pattern of missed or cancelled calls, please contact your facilitator.

Communication

- Use email to work out any logistical or scheduling questions.
- Do not communicate directly to your partner about anything other than scheduling the calls or acknowledging a missed call and confirming when the next call will take place. Bring all other questions to your facilitator.
- If any issues or concerns arise regarding your partner, please contact your assigned facilitator. It is helpful to include the name of your buddy in your email.

Supporting Practice

- If you find this practice valuable, [make a donation](#) to the Zen Monastery Peace Center so we can continue to support you and the Sangha in practice.

Reflective Listening Guidelines

- The listener is requested to do pure reflective listening, simply repeating what the speaker said. There is no drawing out, clarifying or commentary on what was said.
- It is important to repeat what the speaker said in the **speaker's words**.
- It is not necessary to repeat every single word or detail. Repeat a shortened version with attention to using the same words the speaker used.
- If the speaker has shared for a long time before pausing, simply reflect back a portion of what they shared.
- At times, it might be necessary to interrupt by saying something like, "May I jump in here and reflect that back to you?"
- If you are the speaker, pay attention and pause so your partner has a chance to reflect you.
- Do not offer solutions, advice, reassure, say how you identify with what your partner is saying, or comment in any way that is not reflecting back what the speaker has said.
- Do not comment on or refer to the other person's process. For example, instead of saying, "*When I was listening to you process, I watched how much I wanted to tell you what you should do.*" You might say something like, "*I'm looking at a process I do where I find myself wanting to tell others what to do.*" without referring in any way to your partner or what your partner has said.
- Calls should be conducted in a place where other people will not overhear the conversation to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of the call.

- In order to maintain the privileged environment we ask that you do not record RLB calls. It is a challenging practice to be sufficiently present to record only your portion of the call.
- If the privileged environment is compromised and you are uncomfortable on the call, end the call by simply saying, “I think I need to stop this call and get some guidance before we continue.” Examples of compromising the privileged environment: making small talk, projections being made about the speaker, commenting on what is said rather than reflective listening, trying to initiate another form of relationship—essentially anything other than reflective listening and anything that isn’t in line with the guidelines.

Reflective Listening Buddies Practice Commitments

- Practice pure presence in each call.
- Give the gift of that presence to my partner.
- Practice showing up for myself and my partner.
- Practice being on time for each call.
- Practice maintaining and experiencing the benefits of the privileged environment.
- Practice pure reflective listening and refrain from communicating with my partner on other matters.
- Schedule a time to call my buddy within one week of receiving the assignment.
- Respect my partner’s time by notifying them at least 24 hours before I need to cancel or reschedule a call.
- Attend a Support Call each quarter.
- Keep everything said on the call as confidential.
- Ask for guidance as the need arises.
- Use everything that arises in this practice to see how I cause myself to suffer, so I can drop that and end suffering.

Gassho