

Coach's Corner

by Sharon Pahlka, kidney patient and life coach



I don't know, I didn't listen

From the Northwest Kidney Center *Output Newsletter*,
June/July 2006

Arthur: "You know, it's at times like this when I'm trapped in a Vogon airlock with a man from Betelgeuse, and about to die of asphyxiation in deep space that I really wish I'd listened to what my mother said when I was young."

Ford: "Why, what did she tell you?"

Arthur: "I don't know, I didn't listen."

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

How many of us can relate to this? What does it feel like to really listen to someone else? What does it feel like when someone really listens to you? To be listened to is a rare experience. Think of how it feels when someone is totally with you, interested in every word you say. You feel known, understood, and begin to trust. Sometimes, well-intentioned family, friends and co-workers want to solve the problem or take care of the feeling when we just want someone to listen. It is so much better when they get away from their own thoughts and opinions and focus on us by being curious, asking questions, clarifying, validating, reflecting back, and empathizing. We can all commit to listening more fully—and even start with our mothers!

Coaching Question: Will you commit to listening?

Coaching Tip: Fully listening means receiving, having a commitment to understand, paying attention, being non-judgmental and open to ideas of others, having a real dialogue, and risking changing our minds.

Homework: Enter into your next conversation with the commitment to understand the person's viewpoint. After the conversation, consider your listening skill. Describe how well you listened and specifically what you did while listening. What did you discover? Need more challenge? Listen to someone you'd rather not listen to and see what you discover.

Quote: "I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."

Larry King

Sharon is a life coach specializing in helping those with chronic health challenges live well and meaningfully. She spent 19 years on dialysis, and for the last 13 years has had a kidney transplant. To learn more and read other Coach's Corner articles, visit her Web site: <http://www.lifeisagift.com>.