



# PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

Chris McCluskey & Kim Avery

*The podcast dedicated to Raising the Standard of Coaching...  
and Changing the World*

## Episode 019

### The Power of Active Listening

CHRIS: Welcome to a special edition in which Kim and I are going to be doing what we enjoy doing perhaps about as much as anything else which is bantering back and forth. Today's topic is one of the most important topics actually that we could probably take up as coaches and that is listening. The topic of listening, of actively listening as a coach and something that at first blush sounds so simple, so everyday almost like how could you not listen? I try to shut things out not listen but you're going to talk about how to listen and of course, yes, there is a great deal involved in listening well, listening fully, actively listening as we use it in coaching practice. It's quite distinct from simply hearing although we use the same part of our bodies – our ears – we actually use much of the rest of our being as well when we're actively listening as a coach. That's our topic for today. Let's just dive right in here, Kim.

KIM: I'm excited about this topic for several reasons. One is because it's a skill I always want to be growing in. I am a better listener than I used to be and hopefully not as good as I will be. I have a true confession. When I first became a therapist about 112 years ago, I think, I remember I was trying to decide what school to go to. I had a friend going to the University of South Florida where I got my Masters degree and so I called him and said I'm interested in their counselor training and I

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would love to know your experience. He said, “We spend a lot of time learning to listen.” I kid you not, I said, “What learning to listen? How could people ever be changed through listening? It’s all about talking and telling.” I obviously had a lot to learn about the importance and the power of really good listening and so I became a huge advocate and I’m looking forward to it.

Just in listening’s defense if I can say, there had been numerous studies done on the power of listening over the years. Some of the ones that struck me as we came into this today is thinking about how even employers now when they are looking for new employees or to promote internally, one of the chief skills they look for is somebody who is a good listener. This is not just for coaches today, Chris. This is for all of us whether it’s in our home relationships, our work relationships, or relationship with God. Listening is a big deal.

CHRIS: It’s a huge deal. It’s funny when you try to think of metaphors that help understand the distinction that we’re going to be drawing here between hearing and listening. I flashed back to a rather painful episode from my high school years when I had gone out for the soccer team.

I’m out at practice and we had the drills. They are teaching us all the basics of how the game is to be played and then once you understand the basic skills, everything comes down to mastering the skill of ball handling and all the different ways that you can cue each other. Just like dribbling a basketball in a basketball court except here in the soccer court, you’re using your feet not your hands and you’re cuing with your eyes, you’re watching down the field and all. Boy, I just had a big learning curve when it came to ball handling and my coach would yell what I’m sure what he intended to be good instruction from the sidelines, but pretty much the common refrain from McCluskey when he was out there was, “McCluskey, square and on the ground.” I must have heard that, I’m sure, 500 times. “Square and on the ground, McCluskey.” Well, square means that you’re running forward but you’re trying to pass it like a 90-degree angle to your left or to your right. So you’re going to hit it with the side of your foot and on the ground.

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You don't want to scoop the ball and hit it like it's a golf cheap shot or something, you know, it goes up in the air. You want it staying down on the ground.

Well, that takes placement of your foot on the side of your foot as you're running forward in a very eventually learned place. I hadn't learned it yet and I can recall one of the sessions where I just had it. We were at practice and he's hollering out again, "McCluskey, square and on the ground." I said, "I hear you!" He said, "Take a lap." Of course he was right because I was getting kind of mouthy. That was what I flashed on when I was thinking about distinctions between hearing and listening. Actually, I said it correctly to my coach, "I hear you." I don't understand you. I don't actually know what in the world you're really talking about because in this case, he'd never done a very good job of explaining to us, demonstrating for us, and helping us practice in slow motion what square and on the ground really meant in terms of your foot placement and how you do that when you're in a full tilt run. Although I heard the same message over and over, I wasn't able to listen and therefore wasn't really able to do anything with the feedback that I was getting, hence, the end of my very short one-year career at JV Soccer.

**KIM:** You bring up some great points, though, because you needed to understand what he was saying. I know nothing about soccer, right, but I heard you saying you had to watch people out of the corner of eye and read their body language, lean in, and it is really a good picture of listening as full contact sport, right? It takes all of our attention all the time to do a really good job at it.

**CHRIS:** It does and that's what we were referring to in the beginning of this call when we said that you hear, you listen rather certainly with your ears but as a coach, you're actually learning to listen with a great deal, maybe not your whole person, all of your physical parts of your body but certainly with your spirit and with the soul-ish parts of self, and your brain very actively engaged. We are listening in a much more holistic sense than oftentimes we're employed when we're simply hearing someone. In fact, another little thing that came to my mind was the distinction

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again between hearing and listening. We think oftentimes in western culture of persons who have hearing impairment and we, of course, have hearing aids that they can insert in their ear or you can sometimes, if you're noticing trouble hearing, you can go to a doctor and they will say, "Oh, you've got an obstruction in there" or "We need to insert tubes" or "You've got some kind of an infection that's affecting your ability to hear.

What we're going to be looking at today as Kim and I walk through three primary sets of key points here – the benefits of listening well, what active listening really is, and then frequent blocks to good active listening. We're actually looking at the things that can help us become less listening impaired, not hearing impaired. There are all kinds of blocks and I would argue that probably the greatest block to listening well is our selves. We don't have something else in our ear. We have our own voice, we have our own thoughts, our own paradigms, our own ideas, tips, and pointers that we want to share, and those often block the ability to really listen to someone well.

**KIM:** Much more than we would ever think. Let's go ahead then and start with that first one, the benefits of listening. I'm just going to kick it off by sharing one of the things I like to do in our classes where we're teaching people some of these basic coaching skills and about active listening is ask them to close their eyes and think for a minute the last time they felt truly heard, I mean truly heard and understood. Then I ask them what did that do for you in that instance. One of the first thing that comes up is they felt like somebody respected them. They got them. There is some level of acceptance and personhood that comes when somebody really leans in and listens to us. I think that's just ground floor foundational to all good communication.

**CHRIS:** Absolutely. It's the first of our key points here in terms of the benefits of really good listening on the part of the coach is that it will build trust with your client. When we feel really listened to, not only do we feel respected and therefore gain trust in that person, but someone else really listening well to us enables us to listen

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to ourselves much better. Many times, we have things coming out of our mouth all day long and we're not really listening very well to even what we're saying to maybe the tone in which it is being said or the way in which we structured it that it could have been said better, and that's not because we don't know better ways because we're not listening to ourselves. When someone else poses questions, powerful questions and then through active listening helps us to really articulate a clearer response, not only are they listening, building rapport, and gaining our trust but we're listening and realizing more fully, "Oh, that's actually what I really meant to say or really feel," or "Yeah, that would be a better way to address that." Active listening on the part of someone else increases our own ability to listen to ourselves.

**KIM:** Yeah and that trusting environment because how are we ever going to even discover our own thoughts where we're risking to think something different than we've ever thought before, or acknowledge a feeling, desire, or a passion within us that we've not even dared to articulate internally unless somebody creates that accepting, trusting, listening environment by which we can actually hear ourselves even say it for the very first time out loud.

**CHRIS:** It does. Those are some of the key points in terms of just the benefits of really good listening – building that trust, conferring respect on the person, and expanding our own self knowledge as well as, of course, the knowledge on the part of the coach of what we're actually trying to explore, increasing our understanding the degree to which we grasp something, and then increasing our own motivation. When someone is actively listening well and we're articulating clearly, we're getting more fully what we really feel, value, desire, long for. The more we say it and hear it at that deep level, listening deeply, the greater our buy in to actually then investing in it.

**KIM:** So much so and I'm going to get the exact brain science wrong because I am not a neuroscience guru or anything like that, but my understanding is if we have a piece of knowledge that's important or an insight about someone's life and we tell it to

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them, very little goes on in their brain where if we ask a question, not a leading question but just a curiosity question and they come to an “aha” moment or an insight on their own, both sides of the brain light up and new neural connections are formed. They do get that chemical rush that gives them the motivation to actually act on that insight. So everything within their brain moves them towards what it is they really want simply because we were willing to explore and listen and ask those curious questions, so definitely lots of buy in and motivation with that.

CHRIS: Yeah and I would actually encourage our listeners, you might even want to hit the rewind button there for a moment and listen to what Kim just said there and hear it again. If we’re talking about hearing and listening, hear it or listen at a deeper level. When we just tell someone something, even like Kim and I are doing here now, just telling, disseminating information, it does not engage very much of our brain and therefore often doesn’t result in a whole lot of activity from the brain to the body going ahead and moving forward. Whereas when powerful questions are posed and a person begins to explore and articulate, and they are being actively listened to, they are having reflected back for clarity what is it they are really saying, “Ooh say more about that. What would that look like, how could that happen, when could you do that?” Every time that they are more fully listening to themselves because the coach is so actively listening through probing questions, their buy in, their investment, their motivation is increasing because their whole brain and being is increasing the amount of degree to which it is working with that message.

KIM: Great. So now that we’ve explored some of those important benefits of active listening, let’s back up just a little bit and pick it apart and think about what is active listening. I really appreciate the Coactive Coachin book, one of the textbooks we use at PCCI because it breaks listening into three different levels. Actually, we’re going to add a fourth and you’ll talk about that I hope in just a second, but three different levels of listening and this is something that has really

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helped me get a picture in my mind of what I want to be and who I want to be when I'm listening well.

The first level of listening is I think what passes for listening in the majority of our culture and what I used to do before I became more trained in that skill. That is just, like you said, Chris, disseminating information. "Okay, it's my turn to talk. Now it's your turn to talk. While you're talking, I'm going to stop and I'm going to listen." When we go to that level one listening, it's almost as if everything is being filtered through this, "What's in it for me or what does it mean to me" paradigm? An example of that would be if I go to work and somebody says, "Your coworker is having a surgery next week so she is going to be out." As if my first thought were, "Darn, does that mean I'm going to have extra work? I'm not listening for her or about her or with her, I'm only filtering it into "what does this mean to me."

Now there are certainly places and times in our society this is important when I'm transacting something with a clerk and they tell me how much money and I want to know if it does this thing or that thing. That transactional listening, that level one is important, but I think its place pretty much ends there and we certainly want to go beyond that, at least to level two listening, Chris. What do you think would be a good definition of level two listening?

CHRIS: Level two listening is contrasted from that level one and sometimes we put terms to these that help people retain them. Again as Kim said, we're going to cover four levels of listening. The text corrective coaching identifies three and those are excellent. We're just adding in the fourth that we believe is very important because of the Holy Spirit's work in us as believers. Level one listening we often refer to as listening "to" as Kim just said to the information, what does that information mean to me, so listening to the exchange and as she said, there is nothing wrong with it. It's not like it's bad. It would be poor listening if you were trying to do coaching and you were listening all at level one because you're going to get in the way all the time.

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Listening at level one, if somebody says “Hey man, do you know where the copier is in this building?” You listen to that at level one, you go, “the copier.” You don’t need to ask any clarifying questions and all. “By copier, do you mean a large box that is electric and you put something underneath it?” No. You know what a copier is. You know what they are asking. Level one listening is plenty fine for utilitarian tasks, basic exchanges of information as Kim was demonstrating there. You get directions on how to get to a place because you’re lost. You’re going to listen at level one.

So listening “to” is level one listening, listening “for” as what Kim was referring to there just a moment ago when the colleague is going to be going in for surgery, if we listen “for” at level two, we’re listening for what that information means to either the person sharing the information or to someone else. In this case, the colleague is going to have to go for surgery, but to listen for, you’re meaning what’s the greater meaning of what’s being shared, not simply a utilitarian exchange. When I’m listening for, I’m listening for deeper context, deeper import, a deeper level simply of understanding what does this really mean to this person.

When I listen to my children, their concerns, their questions about the world or whatever, if I listen at level one, I’m going to give them what would sound like a very flippant, uncaring answering because I’m assuming they are thinking like an adult in the adult world and gee, you should know that anyway. But if I’m “listening for” at level two with them, I know that they don’t have that information. They don’t even have the worldview or paradigm that would allow them to interpret something until I help them with it. So listening “for” something at level two puts me into their shoes and allows me to couch my response in a manner that’s actually going to be much more helpful to the speaker than it would be if I just responded of what it meant to me.

**KIM:** Absolutely. That’s important and we certainly want to be listening at least to that level when we’re in coaching because it is all about the client all the time, except for when you’re making your next appointment, but other than that, it certainly is.



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Even with your employees and direct reports, I think we want to bring that kind of listening and understanding. I think that's why employers are looking for good listening skills so that you're understanding the world from their point of view, and that's not just going to benefit them. That's going to benefit you as their supervisor.

We can even go beyond that and better than that, which is that listening "with". I think of this almost in a physical way, Chris, where your eyes are only on the person that you're leaning in, that you shut out all those external distractions. You're not just listening to the words but to what's not being said, to the way it's being said, to the greater context of their life and their passions and their desires as they say it, and level three listening really brings that kind of intuition, I think, into our listening. We know believers and nonbelievers have intuition. We talk about a mother's intuition, that kind of sixth sense you bring. You don't know why you know your kid is misbehaving but you just know that you know.

CHRIS: And you do, absolutely.

KIM: You do. They don't like it and they say, "How do you know?" "I don't know but I knew," but hopefully in a good way, we can bring our intuition and really connect the dots. They will say a few things and maybe something will flash into our minds or maybe not even consciously that they said a few weeks ago. All of a sudden, we can reflect with a metaphor or with an awareness that pulls something out of them that neither of us knew what was there until that moment happened. It's really, I get goose bumps thinking about it. It's a beautiful moment when we're listening at that level and something is birthed that's been there and neither of us knew it was there because we're working hard and we're leaning in and listening with them with every breath of our being.

CHRIS: Isn't that a great way to articulate it to that we're listening with them. That's why we call level three listening "with". Again to contrast it with other two, not just listening "to" what does that mean to me, not even listening "for" what does it

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mean to them, I'm listening "for" the meaning to them. That would be kind of like sympathetic listening. I'm sympathizing with my child. I got to remember they don't know what I know so I'll get into their little shoes and kind of give them an answer that's going to make sense because I was listening "for" that's sympathizing, but level three is empathetic listening. Literally stepping in alongside of the person and empathically, empathetically, intuitively listening with them the two of you together as more and more of the reality, more of the complexity, more of the many fingers that this thing has and lots of different areas of their life and being begin to present themselves.

Scripture encourages us when we're meeting with those who are struggling or suffering to weep with those who weep. You're only going to do that if you are listening "with" them. When you connect at that deep level, so many more things are picking up than just your cognitive mind or your five senses, as Kim said, that sixth sense, that spiritual sense of us, our intuition that does indeed know things that our five senses and our cognitive mind don't know. That's what we're bringing to engage and as we said, coactive coaching, the secular model of coaching, that's what they present and we think they've really struck pay dirt with that. We love that we even can take this to a fourth level, right, Kim?

KIM: Yeah, and this is the best level of all.

CHRIS: Well it is. I'm not sure it's something that we can cause or create so much as we invite or place ourselves in a position to allow to happen. We posture in such a manner that the Holy Spirit, different and distinct from our own spirits, but the Holy Spirit who lives in any Christian. We've invited that. We asked Him in and He assures us, Christ said, "It's better for me that you go. If I don't go, I cannot send the counselor. When I do, He will reveal to you all truth." So we invite in the counselor, the Holy Spirit, the coach, the Lord God himself taking up residence in our being, communing with our being, and so at level four listening, we call that listening "in" and the reference there being to "in the spirit, the Holy Spirit."

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There will be things that will come out of that depth of listening. Again, not something that you so much cause or create as the coach but you allow, you seek to facilitate, to create space for, inviting the Holy Spirit in that when the two of you together are listening “with” each other and then “in” the Spirit, things come tumbling out of the client’s mouth and both of you are stopped dead in your tracks and realize, “Whoah, wait a minute. That didn’t come certainly not from the coach but that didn’t even really come from the client. That was from the throne. That was from on high, from me, to me, about me but it came by the Lord’s Spirit out of my mouth. That is a sweet space in which a Christian coach can seek to enter with a client.

**KIM:** Yeah, it’s a beautiful thing. Like you said, it’s almost as if we can set the table and get everything ready, and that’s what we’re trying to do with our skills, with our very being, and our presence, and then just inviting the Lord, and sometimes indeed, it’s as if He pulls up a chair at the table and sits down and enters the conversation. It’s a sacred moment.

**CHRIS:** Let’s hit those one last time before we transition here into our third set of points which is the blocks to active listening. Just to define those again, levels one, two, three, and four, all of them valuable, none of them bad, the lesser levels poor if you were trying to do good coaching because they are not going to carry you that far, but all of them needed. We want to be working at the higher levels. Level one again we call listening “to”. That just means what does the information mean to me in my worldview, my paradigm, my way of understanding. What does it mean to me? Level two, what I’m listening “for”. That means what does it mean for them. What’s the context, what’s their worldview? What does that mean in their culture, their life experience?

Level three, I’m alongside of them listening “with.” The two of us are in this process of coactive co-discovery. It is not just the power of the coach nor is it just the power of the client. It is the power of the coach and the client working together in relationship listening with at level three as things come out. Then in

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the Christian model, we invite the Holy Spirit and even if the client is not a Christian, we don't blatantly force our faith on our client but we certainly pray beforehand and at times quietly throughout the time you have. "Lord reveal, unveil, disclose for us, unstop deaf ears. Give us the ability to hear with spirit ears what we will otherwise miss unless you give us that spiritual hearing." That's the listening "in" the Holy Spirit.

**KIM:** One of the things I like to do, Chris, is when we discuss listening in some of the classes we teach is to ask students just arbitrarily, there's no study ever been done that I know of, just a percentage. What percentage of your world takes place at level one listening communication all your conversations put together? I've probably been polling for six or seven years now so I don't know how many hundreds or thousands of students I've polled and the answer I get back consistently is 90% or above, very rare for it to be less. This is my thought. It's no wonder the world doesn't get along if we're not even listening to each other, with each other, for each other, if we're not even hearing what other people are saying and understanding, how can we even hope to come to agreement, to understanding, to love, to grow into the depths that Christ has called us to grow into if we're truly only listening at level one 90% of the time. This is not a light thing. This is a really important topic and I think it's a high call that we can enter into not just in official coaching relationships but in all our relationships. Almost all of the time, we can do better than what we've been doing.

**CHRIS:** Like you said not hard statistics there but whatever that number is, it's a whopping big number and it might be 90%. Whatever it is, we can better and as coaches, we have to do better. We have to keep ramping up our ability to listen at these deeper levels.

Let's transition over into what some of these blocks are. Again as Kim and I were preparing for today, we were each just looking over research, literature, and thinking back on life experiences. One of the beautiful pictures in Scripture where Jesus comes to a man deaf and dumb, and of course gives him the incredible gift of

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a miraculous healing that he is able to hear and to speak then, and it's one of those rare points in Scripture – there are only four places where the Gospel writers give us the actual Aramaic words that Jesus spoke, the literal words that tumbled out of His mouth. That word at that point that Jesus came to that deaf and dumb man and placed His hands on his ears. He said to him, “Effatha.” Effatha means “Be opened.” I love that I think that had a whole lot more to do than just unstop your ears. I believe that man's whole being spiritually was reborn at that moment, be opened.

As we look at some of these blocks to us being able to be better at being opened, I think that's just a good prayer for us. “Lord, speak that word to us, Effatha, by the power of your Spirit and then by the challenges to us to increase ever our skills, our abilities with these coaching skills. Bring us to a space of greater openness, greater ability to hear and really listen.”

KIM: Amen. The biggest block I think to listening is talking. My mother used to say, “God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason.” It's just not to talk. So in coaching relationships, we have kind of what we call an 80-20 rule. Really, if we're doing a good job, the client is usually talking 80% of the time and we're only talking 20% of the time. Of course these aren't necessarily hard and fast rules, but it's good to know. It's good for me to keep that in mind and pay attention. Am I saying too many words? Am I talking too much because if I am, I know that I cannot conceivably be listening well. One of my favorite coach sayings and I'm not sure who originated it, Chris, though. I'd love to give him full credit is, “The sign of a good coach is his guard tongue.” I think that's just so true. I've been known, since we work over the phone to literally put my hand over my mouth sometimes thinking, “Kim, do not talk.” There's so much I want to say but it's much more effective if I listened. So I literally bite my tongue or put my hand over my mouth. I think a good rule of thumb for all of us in all our conversations really is that 80-20 rule. Talk less, listen more.

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CHRIS: Think about that. That's quite a challenge actually. It's one thing to say 80% of the time we're listening, 20% of the time we're talking, but you really talk only 20% of the time in a conversation when you're actually being paid very good money to help someone but you're only going to carry 20% or less of the conversation? Wow. You better be posing some seriously powerful questions and then you better be doing some very active listening to call forth from that person what they need to hear and gain clarity about. I mean, this is not an impossible challenge. That is the challenge of coaching but it is a challenge. It is a real challenge.

One of the other blocks that we frequently encounter in trying to learn to listen well is our own internal processing. This doesn't mean we necessarily are expressing it out loud. We're not articulating it but I can even not be saying it. So I can be scouring my tongue, biting my tongue, and not saying anything, but if I'm internally mostly thinking about what my response is going to be or what would be a good next question. Where else should I go with this? If I've got dialogue inside of Chris' head going on, "Well, this client is outside of me trying to explore and express, and I'm trying to listen with them and even in the spirit alongside of them to this, well goodness gracious, I'm in the way." I'm not saying anything but I'm every bit as much in the way as if I were because I'm actually listening much more to my own monologue with self than I am to what's going on with them. Thinking of your own response while the other person is talking is a huge impediment to effective listening.

KIM: Right. So being willing to pause when they are done then compose our thought or question and not panic at that, and then along those same lines comes not just thinking those thoughts but sometimes what are those thoughts we're thinking because it's so easy for us I think, at least in the western culture, to enter that judger's mindset instead of that learner's mindset, to be filtering what they are saying and thinking. Is that good or bad? Do I like it, do I not like it? Is it what I would do? Is it not what I would do? We're forming these value judgments about

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their processing, their decisions, what they are saying, and I don't know, Chris, I don't think it matters who it is. They don't have to say a word. I can smell it over the phone if someone is judging me. It's not enough for us to not speak our judgments out loud. We have to pray and come with a pure heart before the Lord and a genuine exploratory spirit and a trust that God is going to lead them to the right decision and I just need to stay out of that judging business altogether. I'm a learner and my job is to learn how to help them and who they are and how they learn and just not make those judgments.

CHRIS: And oh that is so hard to do. Even when we're learning that, this is a different topic for a different day but the art of asking powerful questions and good effective coaching questions that invite exploration and are genuinely curious. A coach who is learning how to listen better can sometimes go ahead with their 20% that they get to ask a question and ask a leading question, a loaded question, a question that, "Okay, I'm not telling him what to do but I sure hope they are going to get the right answer because I really think you got to do this."

There's the judgment coming through loud and clear and again, just an evidence of poor listening. Very well intentioned, they are wanting to help but very poor coaching and not helpful at best, damaging at worst sometimes.

Another of our impediments to this, another of our blocks that we can easily all fall into and I think have to very consciously work to guard against is multitasking. Of course brain science has proven now that we can't actually multitask. We say, "Oh, I'm multitasking." No, you're having little bursts of attention from this thing to that thing to something else and then back to the other, but nobody could actually literally do two things simultaneously. The brain won't handle it. It gives focus back and forth, back and forth. Anytime that we are trying to attend to something else while we are supposed to be actively listening, we're actually really blocking the likelihood of hearing at a deep level. It is not likely to happen very well because we keep allowing other distractions to come in.

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**KIM:** Absolutely. While I'm paying attention to one thing whether it's my thought or something else going on, I am not paying attention to them. How do I know that wasn't that critical thought or the emotion rising up in their voice just a little bit showing something important, and I've missed it because I was thinking what, I could answer an email at the same time or something? Multitasking is out and maybe it's just me, Chris, but part of what gets in my way is if I allow myself to be in a cluttered environment. To me, that's almost an external temptation to great to bear to not multitask. If I have my computer monitor on at all while I'm coaching, that's a mistake.

There have been times when just really not having the blinds drawn on my window, one time I was coaching and the squirrel jumped from the tree to the birdfeeder to my window and it was like a Looney tunes cartoon. He had all four little paws with his nails digging in my window, sliding down the picture window slowly while I'm trying to coach somebody. It's hard not to be distracted by the squirrel doing that and so I've learned. For me at least, I have to have a clean desk, computer off, door shut, Post-It note if I have family members in the house, "Do not disturb," all of that going on. Like you said, people are paying us. Even if they weren't, they are worthy of my full attention. I need to have a clean environment, for me anyway, to have a clean mind and to not multitask.

**CHRIS:** Absolutely. That underscores the point that this one, all of them need to be very conscious things, but we can do very many things to decrease the likelihood of distraction or winding up multitasking, and you hit one of them. For me, I have to actually get away from my computer desk altogether. I set my office in such a way that I have a sofa in one area and I have a very comfortable overstuffed chair in another area that principally is for reading, but that's also my coaching chair because it's away from everything else, even if I've got the computer off but I didn't turn the sound off, when an email comes in, I hear "ping" and that's enough sometimes to distract.



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When I get up, have my Yale Notepad, my clipboard and my pen and I move away from everything else, oftentimes back at my old office in particular, I would go out on the deck and just sit outside. Now I might see a squirrel out there but I'm not going to see other business things calling for my attention, my cluttered desk or whatever else. I am as fully present with that client as I can be. Even thinking about meeting a client face to face if you're in a restaurant somewhere, Starbucks or whatever, I will try to find a place furthest away from all the distractions and then I'll even place myself such that my client might be looking out into the room but I'm going to be looking as much at my client and then a wall behind him as I can. No other distractions, no multitasking, no other thing except whatever is going on coming out of their mouth and inside of them, with them as we listen together hopefully in the Spirit.

**KIM:** Yeah, with every breath of our being, that's the kind of listening we want to bring. I think the other internal distractor that sometimes gets in our way, at least in my way, Chris, is I can forget that it's not my job to solve the problem or the issue, or whatever it is they are bringing to the table. I'm not a consultant. I'm not there to help them figure something out and as long as my attention is on that, my attention is not where it really should be. Listening to them, asking those curiosity questions, helping them be in the very best space to listen to their own heart as they figure out the problem. As we say in coaching, "Coach the person, not the problem." That's exactly what we want to do with our listening – bring it fully to that person trusting the process, trusting God knowing that the problem will get solved when we're doing our job of listening well and interacting well with our client.

**CHRIS:** So you've heard several of the key benefits of listening well. You've heard us distinguish then what the various levels are that we teach at Professional Christian Coaching Institute of listening well from listening "to" to listening "for" to listening "with" and finally to listening "in." Anything particularly in levels two but especially three and four, that's where we want to kind of camp out. Then

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you've heard several of the blocks that can impair really good listening and some of the things that we can proactively do. Kim, I don't know about you, in preparing to do a talk like this where our poor listeners cannot interact with us. They are having to listen but all their hearing is us talking, I realized that the format itself presents a real block to them being able to take in what we're sharing and do anything with it. We're going to kind of wrap this up with a call to action, right? We're going to try to say, "Okay, you heard a lot of information, not sure how deeply you've grasped, but now how can we help our listeners begin to do something with this to make it more fully their own?"

KIM: Sure and I think one of the best ways to do that is not to just make big promises to ourselves. "I'm going to be a better listener" because that's pretty vague in general, or to make big promises that I will never again talk more than 20% of the time, but small simple steps forward. So I would encourage people and I know you would too to think of something that just was triggered in your mind, whether it's an 80-20 rule, maybe cleaning off your desk before you invite an employee or a client in to listen to them. Closing your eyes while you're listening so you can focus fully, inviting the Holy Spirit even silently to yourself into each conversation. I would encourage people to just pick one thing for one week. Put it on a Post-It note whatever it is you do to remind yourself. Make it a matter of prayer and just move deeper into the space as a level three, level four listener that I know God is calling all of us into all of the time. My hope and prayer is that each of you will pick one of those actions and Chris and I would like to be a part of it. It would be great if this were a conversation actually two-way.

If something has touched you, if you're moving closer, please stop by our Facebook page at Professional Christian Coaching Today. Chris and I drop in frequently and we would love to have a conversation with you about listening, hear what God has spoken to your heart and be able to respond back to you in a little bit more personal way. Also as you know, part of our mission, maybe our primary mission here in this podcast is just to expand the awareness and the reach of

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coaching worldwide. We believe that this is one of God's primary tools to reach this generation to grow His kingdom and to help us to do that, if you would be willing to stop by iTunes, leave just an honest rating and review. It will help our visibility so that other people could help join in what we're doing.

CHRIS: Thanks so much and we do hope to be able to hear from you and to interact with you on that Facebook page there. Until next time, gang. Keep raising the standard of coaching in changing the world.

KIM: God's richest blessings to you.