



Get Started with Listening Partnerships

What is a Listening Partnership?

In a nutshell, a Listening Partnership is **an exchange of listening support between adults**. It can be a lifesaver to have someone who is willing to offer you their kind, caring attention in the form of a listening ear – rather than keeping all the mixed feelings pent up inside and then exploding on your kids.

How can I set this up in my own life?

A listening Partner can be your friend or someone you've never met. It's good to keep a couple of **boundaries** around the agreement. One is that you hold **confidentiality** to the degree that anything you say during listening time cannot be referred to by anyone but you. So if you are pairing with a friend, you need to take care in your usual conversations to remember which things they told you in confidence.

The other aspect that helps maintain the safety of the exchange is to **honour the time commitment**, split the time equally, use a timer and don't chat either side of the exchange, as this can erode the sense of safety.

You might swap anything between 10-45 minutes each and you can arrange as many exchanges as you need per week. You might be monogamous to just one Listening Partner - or like me, highly polyamorous!

Over time you will develop an unparalleled sense of safety and connection with your listener/s. When you feel truly safe with them your body will start to release this stored up hurt through emotional expressions or crying / laughter / rage / yawning / sweating / trembling. This is when you will notice things in your life beginning to shift. We tend to find that our ability to be calm and patient and listen to our children is directly proportional to how much listening we receive ourselves.

Guidelines for listening

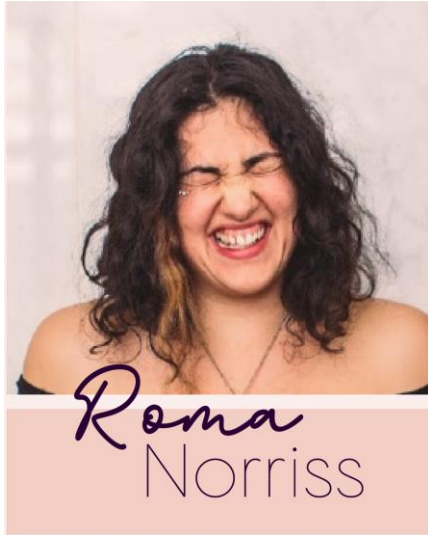
- Move in close with your warmth, eye contact and attention.
- Remember that the person who is speaking is and has always been doing their very best (and likewise any of the people they are talking about).
- Avoid any urge to reassure, ask questions or offer advice. Just be with them and allow their depth of feeling. Remember your attention alone is all they need to figure any of this out and that they are the expert on their own life as they have all the inside information.
- Help your partner focus on the feelings that lie beneath what they say. Gently guide their attention back to the issue that seems emotionally charged. You might ask:
 - Can you say more about that?
 - How is that for you?
 - When did you first feel that way?
 - Who does he remind you of?
 - What does this make you feel like doing?
 - Was there ever a time it wasn't this way?
- Help them laugh or tremble by doing so with them. Encourage them to rage by offering your hands to push on or suggesting something like "Try saying 'I hate it when you do this'" or "Try saying 'leave me alone'". Help them cry by offering your warmth, understanding and closeness.
- Counter feelings of inadequacy, separation, loss, guilt or shame, by reminding them that none of this was their fault, they are doing their absolute best, they are a good parent/spouse/friend.

The beautiful thing about Listening Partnership is that it's available to everyone for free.

If you'd like to find a Listening Partner and don't know who to reach out to, join our Facebook group and post a request in there ['Hand in Hand Listening Support UK'](#)

You can find additional resources in this article:

<https://www.handinhandparenting.org/article/how-to-find-a-listening-partner/>



Roma Norriss is a Parenting Consultant specialising in turning around unworkable family situations where nothing else has worked. She is a mother of two living in Somerset, where she consults and teaches internationally about parenting, intimacy, listening and the impact of early trauma on relationships. Roma is known for being a refreshingly human, forgiving and warm facilitator. Roma blogs and writes for publications like Huffington Post, Elephant Journal, JUNO Magazine, The Practicing Midwife and Rebelle Society. She is an accomplished speaker experienced in webinars, conferences, radio, TV and podcasts.

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