



The Listening Ladder

Three rounds: the words, the feeling, the unsaid

Most listening stops at the first rung. Depth is a choice you make on purpose — and the last rung is the one nobody takes.

**What did you actually hear —
the words, the feeling, or the
silence?**

The three rungs

- A — Literal: the listener restates the words only. Did the facts land?
- B — Feeling: add what sits under the words. Right, or over-reach?
- C — Unspoken: ask one question about what was left unsaid. Then hold the silence.

How it runs

Round	The listener may...	The validator says
A	Paraphrase the facts	landed / not yet
B	Name the feeling	fits / not yet
C	Ask what was left unsaid	sat with it / rushed

The third role: the validator

- The card has two faces only — **landed** and **not yet**. There is no "close enough".
- "Not yet" is the gift: it shows the pair exactly where the loop broke.
- Roles rotate so everyone is a speaker once across the three rounds.

Round C is not advice.

Ask one question, then let the silence hold.

The speaker fills the gap — that is the hearing.

Three ways it fails, three rescues

- Round C turns into fixing → hold the rule: one question, then quiet.
- The validator is polite → only two faces on the card; "not yet" is welcome.
- A feeling gets stated as fact → always close round B with "have I got that right?"

The measure

- Before pairing: five short items about your own last week at work.
- After the debrief: the same five, now about the ladder you just climbed.
- Score the pair's move, never rank a person's ear — the exercise measures the loop.

Three questions in the debrief

- 1. Which rung did your pair climb easiest — and which did they skip?**
- 2. Where did the validator say "not yet", and what changed before it became "landed"?**
- 3. What is the one round-C question you will ask in a real conversation this week?**

What actually transfers

- The skipped rung is the one the room already skips at work — name the cost.
- One pair, one rung to practise, chosen from their smallest positive delta.
- Re-listening beats ploughing on — repair is a skill, not a setback.

Run it seated · keep it fifteen minutes · report the pair, not the person

A listening session is working when someone finally asks the
question they had been skipping.

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