



## Notes From Under the Prairie Sky

Issue #2

January 2011



In my first e-zine I told you I would send you my musings from time to time. Before I begin today I want you to look at the pic at the top of my page. It looks just like that here today. It is gorgeous to look at and feels crispy and crunchy under foot. We were unable to get to town to the dentist this morning because even with a ¾ ton 4 wheel drive we could not make it to the highway and had to turn around. We tried going through the field but the snow was packed too hard. The rabbits and pheasants are having a ball and are great fun to watch.

It is a far cry from the city as I sit here and think about leadership, listening, attention and awareness.

In my last e-zine we briefly looked at the concepts of "Leading from the Future as it Emerges" "which is the name of a book and concept developed by Dr. Otto Scharmer. (You can find information on Otto Scharmer and Theory U at [www.ottoscharmer.com](http://www.ottoscharmer.com) or purchase the book at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

The four kinds of listening and the intention and attention we bring to any situation when we are listening is of utmost importance to the outcome of the conversation or presentation.

The four kinds of listening included Downloading; Factual; Empathic and Generative. In issue #1 I looked at downloading which is what we do when we are listening out of habit and hear what we expect to hear. Much of our day to day dialogue with family and colleagues is done by downloading their statements and knowing what we will say before they have finished. We do not set an intention to listen differently and we pay little attention.



Skidoodle - my new puppy

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The second type of listening is the factual listening. This is when we are listening for new facts and could include for instance what changed during the last shift or listening to a lecture where you are learning. You are paying attention because you might have to act on what you hear. You may find that you switch from downloading to factual in an instant if new information comes from the speaker.

My typical example is when your teenager is asking to go somewhere with a friend and you are downloading thinking I know where this is going and I know how I will respond and then a car is mentioned or a new boyfriend and you switch your attention on and listen for facts.

In factual listening you listen for what is different from what you already know. You switch off your inner voice of judgement. You ask questions and pay careful attention to the responses.

The third type of listening is empathic listening and all of us in the human service field have had at least some training in this type of listening. In this type of listening we open our heart and connect directly with the person without a mental abstract in place. We begin to see the world through the eyes of the other person. We feel a profound switch inside and forget about our own agenda. If we say "I know how you feel" it is not because that is what we should say it is because of the profound shift in our heart and a knowing of what the other person is experiencing.

The fourth kind of listening is Scharmer calls generative. This I find hardest to describe as it is difficult to give examples of when this happens. If we are trying to lead our organizations or our lives as they emerge from the future we don't have easy examples except perhaps in nature when planting an acorn and knowing how it will turn into a tree if we nurture it properly. We can see the tree in our minds when we plant the acorn and we give it the space to grow into what it is meant to be. How do we lead our lives and our organizations using that same premise. Dr. Scharmer says we can use a blend of the words presence and sensing. When we do this we are in a heightened state of attention that allows us to shift the inner place from which we function. We are fully present and we sense something new. Generative listening happens when we feel connected to something larger than ourselves. This listening moves us from the current field to an even deeper realm of emergence. He says we are listening from the emerging possibility and this level of listening requires us to open our heart and our will which then opens our capacity to connect with our highest future. Scharmer provides a whole process which organizations around the world are utilizing in order to move to a better future.

You can read all about it at  
[www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/books.php](http://www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/books.php)

I find the presencing idea which allows individuals and groups to begin to shift the inner place from which they function so they can operate from a future space of possibility that they want to emerge gives us a new operating platform from which to plan for the future of our organizations.

We probably can think of those rare occasions when we were part of something that worked like this but to recreate the magic is something we don't really know how to do. Professor Scharmer gives us some clues.

I hope this gets you thinking as it did me.

If you didn't get my first ezine you can view it on my website:  
[www.prairieskyexecutivecoaching.com](http://www.prairieskyexecutivecoaching.com)

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