



# Silent Wisdom!

## **Ethical Magic *Sleight-of-Mind*** **Prepared by Philip H. Henderson**

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There is a special kind of wisdom that lives only in silence.

Silent wisdom is a valuable mode of communication. When I listen with empathy, I give you time to speak your mind. As my silence draws your speech, I begin to hear the depths of your meaning. You will feel completely understood. Instead of quickly jumping in whenever you pause or catch your breath, I wait with interest to hear and to understand what you have next to say.

I will wait until the silence is uncomfortable to both of us and yet continue to look at you with anticipation of your next words. Sometimes, in this silence, as we gaze into each other's eyes, you notice how devoted I am to hearing you speak freely. When you see that I am not judging you and am only seeking to know you, you feel free and relaxed.

We are uncomfortable in our relationships to allow silence to work its magic. We have not learned the wisdom that only silence brings forth. The fast pace of our lives and our desire to have everything right now—the hasty way we evaluate the world-- keeps us from knowing the deep love and gratitude that lives in our hearts. However, you can learn to use silence as your friend. You can change how to get the best from your relationships with your spouse,

children, parents, and coworkers. You can change if you want to. I have devised an exercise that will demonstrate to you the power of silence to reveal wisdom.

The next time you are with a small group of three to five friends, or family, choose to play the role of 'The Observer.' Instead of being an active conversant in the group, turn your attention to observe how the conversation moves from speaker to speaker. Don't be concerned about what is said or even attempt to follow or understand what is being discussed. Your role as 'The Observer' is to count.

As 'The Observer,' you are to watch who speaks first, and then notice who is next to speak and so on. Pay particular attention to how much time elapses between the first speaker and the next speaker. Often you will observe that the next speaker 'steps on' the first speaker. That is, before the first person has completed his or her last sentence, the next speaker begins, effectively cutting off the first speaker. When the third person to speak chimes in, he or she is likely to 'step on' the speaker they are following.

As 'The Observer' your responsibility is to count the number of times in a five-minute conversation that there is a pause long enough for the first speaker to think before resuming his or her discourse. Also, count the number of times in a ten-minute conversation that there is a pause long enough for anyone to become the next speaker without 'stepping on' the last speaker. You may also notice whether you could have entered the conversation without 'stepping on' a speaker.

Conduct this experiment with your family, with a group of friends, and with the people you work with. As you become a keen observer, you will also become an able empathic listener. You will see the flow of the conversation and notice who has the greatest influence on the direction of thought. After a

short while you will begin to enjoy being the observer. You will gain a huge advantage over the other conversants because you will understand the point of view of each speaker.

Sometimes you will have a greater awareness of an individual's point of view than he has himself, because you are listening to him better than he is listening to himself. When I play the role of an observer, I often 'playback' to a speaker the exact words and intonation that he spoke seconds ago.

*“John, you just told me that you didn't want to hear what your children have to say. Is this true? Do you want to hear what your children have to say?”*

Invariably John replies, *“Yes, I want to hear what my children have to say.”*

Seconds before, it was clear that John did not want to hear his children. He said it so forcefully that I knew that he meant what he said. In fact, John does not want to hear what his children have to say. He is their father. What he says is important and what they say to him is not—father is right, children are wrong.

John is unwilling to use silence to hear more from his children. He tells them what to do, however he is unwilling to hear them speak freely. When they disagree with him, they are out-of-place, they are wrong. Do you want to hear your children speak? What if your son or daughter is telling you something about himself (or herself) that you do not want to be true? Are you only willing to listen when your child is telling you what you want to hear from him or her? Think about it. When was the last time that you encouraged your child to tell you more about an event that showed your child to be doing something you did not like?

If you have a teenage child who has not told you about events or thoughts that you do not like, it is only because you have taught your child that it is a waste of their time to tell you the truth! Our children have thoughts that we as parents wish they did not have. Our teenage children engage in activities that we would be embarrassed to know about. Teenagers work hard to keep the truth away from parents. Until you prove yourself worthy as a parent, your teenage child will not share these truths with you. As you become more accustomed to using silent wisdom, you will begin to hear the truth from your children. These are the most important moments in the development of an enduring, trusting relationship with your child.

Imagine, if you have trouble listening to your children how hard it is to listen to your parents, your boss, your coworkers, and even your friends. When you practice silent wisdom, you will develop yourself into a full time empathic listener. Full time empathic listeners hear the most important stories told by the most important people in their lives. When you become a person who is an empathic listener, your ability to understand the emotions and thoughts of those around you, will make you the most influential person in the conversation. You will control the conversation as a listener, not as a speaker. This subtle power (empathic listening) is superior to that of the most successful public speaker. What makes it powerful is that it is so rare and so much sought after. We all seek someone who listens to us without judgment, seeking only to understand us and then to love us for who we are. The Silent Wisdom exercise is your first step to this ability.

Practice being an observer and learn the secret wisdom of the universe.