



SEED'S TIP OF THE MONTH:

FEBRUARY

Are We Listening for What Is Trying to Happen?

By Melinda Lackey

Most working professionals spend more than half their time in meetings. Feel the pain? Me, too!

Whether by phone, live, or internet, I am in meetings most all day. Then after work, guess what, more meetings! So much of life happens in meetings of one kind or another, and most of them take too long, accomplish too little, and are generally somewhat of a drag to endure. Especially when the outcomes matter.

The more I care about the people and the content, the harder it is to endure bad meetings. How about you?

Early in my career, I realized that I needed my meetings to be significantly transformed. So I began paying attention and trying to figure out how to lead more effectively. I learned from different sources, and recognized that every meeting was a chance to expand my powers of observation. I began noticing what makes some meetings better than others.

Paying attention to the leaders, I am always inspired by those who show up in ways that elicit the wisdom of each participant. I notice that the best meetings are led by people who mainly ask questions.

Whether leading or participating, I love, love, love to be involved when the collective wisdom is discovered. When there is guidance to “listen for what is trying to happen,” and the leader encourages and really values all viewpoints, however different. In fact, in groups with skills to hold differences in creative tension, the more divergence the better. Then it is like striking a match; a fire is ignited. Ideas emerge that are the product of shared values, exploring what we do not understand and finding common ground.

It is not about compromise. Rather it involves listening for fresh insight that no one person could have perceived on their own. This requires listening with an open heart and an intention to be moved—to discover something new.

Over time I have been able to pull together a variety of meeting practices that save time and elicit this type of magic. Our team at SEED attempts to model helpful practices in everything we do.

Together with our partners at [Take Two](#), SEED will co-lead a webinar on “meetings” **February 7, 1:30-2:30 pm ET**, for the Foundation Center. If you are able to tune in, you will learn some tips to focus on “being” as well as “doing” in meetings.

[Register for the webinar here](#). Join us and we'll listen together for what's trying to happen.

