

ON LISTENING

When I ask you to listen to me and you start by giving advice,
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems,
You have failed me, strange as it may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen, not talk or do...
Just hear me.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,
You contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

And I can do for myself: I'm not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

But when you accept as simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you
and get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense
When we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people...
because God is mute, and God doesn't give advice or try to fix things.
God just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn: and I'll listen to you.

by Ralph Roughton

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