

## Centered Listening\*

Centered listening is a practice that helps us to be more open, present and connected to others. It is an essential part of balancing *advocacy* (the ability to confidently express our views) with *inquiry* (the capacity to genuinely listen – and be open to – the views of others). A leader that can listen in a centered way, even to those whose views differ from theirs, builds trust and enrolls others in the future they want to create.

Here's how it works:

- Center Yourself: Feel your feet into the floor. Inhale and lengthen your spine; exhale and relax your jaw, shoulders and chest.
- Be Curious: Bring a spirit of openness and curiosity to the conversation and to what is being expressed by others. A relaxed, open posture and the language of “what if” (e.g., “what if we tried this?”) support a mood of curiosity. When we are curious, we are predisposed to ask questions, suspend judgment and create new possibilities.
- Extend your Attention: Direct your attention towards the other person and extend it beyond them if possible. Doing so helps others to have the felt sense that they are being seen and heard by you.
- Visualize words landing in the Space: Use your imagination to see or to sense the words being spoken by the other person landing in the space between you (and outside of you), rather than coming directly *at* you. This helps you to maintain a curious, non-defensive stance, even in the face of push-back or dissent.

\* Source: This practice is based on the work of Wendy Palmer, as cited in her book, *Leadership Embodiment*, by Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford