



What is Story Polarisation Listening

In this video, we explore Story Polarisation Listening is an addition to Story Listening so please make sure you watch that video first.

Now, there are five parts to this video.

1. What do we mean by polarities?
2. Why listen for opposites?
3. How to listen for polarities to discover what is missing
4. How to bring the dilemmas into the person's conscious awareness
5. How polarities help us maintain balance in our lives

What do we mean by polarities?

Physical Polarities

The most apparent polarities are light and dark, positive and negative electrical terminals in your car battery and the north and south poles.

Would you like to live permanently at the South Pole?

How long do you think it would take before you became uncomfortable longing for the warmth of the sun on your back?

With average summer temperatures of -28 C and with winter plunging to -76 degrees it wouldn't take me too long I can assure you.

So most sensible humans choose to live between the poles, and we thrive.

The closer we get to the poles, the more uncomfortable we become.
At the equator the temperature is stable, and life is comfortable.

The polarities we are talking about are psychological.

A polarity is a relationship between two opposite characteristics and they are the inner conflict the inner dilemma that every human must have to function effectively,



We need polarities if we want to stay in a state of equilibrium.

So, what is a polarity?

Polarity is an ongoing problem with two correct answers. It is a dilemma.

Some examples of polarities are:

- I am loveable – I am unloveable
- I am worthy - I am not worthy
- I can do it - I can't do it
- I'm good enough – I am not good enough
- We have the potential to be both Good and bad
- Doubt - confident
- Pain - joy
- Fear - fearless
- Build - destroy
- Feel good about yourself - feel bad about yourself
- Adequate - inadequate
- Angry - pleased
- Accepted - lonely life - death
- War – Peace
- Happy – Sad

You can feel unhappy and happy but not both at the same time.

These are the human dilemmas, the polarities that we live with every day. They support and undermine just about everything you have done or are planning to do.

I can and I can't.

You can be close to your partner and sometimes stay distant.

Good and evil exists in the world. War and peace. Love and hate.

I know that I can be kind and cruel. I can be patient and impatient, Loveable and unloveable.



We need to live in the 'and'.

Why listen for polarities

We listen for polarities to help other people live in the 'and'.

Mindful listening is a passive early intervention prevention tool.

We listen for the opposites in a person's stories because they show where the person is struggling. We do not listen to them so we can fix them.

There is a link to a fantastic humorous video, 'It's **Not** About the Nail' in the More resources Tab. The video shows how people so often try to fix what seems obvious to them, but the person speaking is unaware.

1. How to listen for polarities

We listen for the dilemma in other people so that we can help them bring the difficulty into clarity, allowing them to resolve the issue they are facing.

With story listening, we listen for repeated words, phrases and metaphors. In story Polarity listening, we also look for the opposites in the person's stories. And then we help them to bring that dilemma into their conscious awareness with either a perception check or story check.

In the Story Listening video, I told you about Steve. There were two missing polarities.

There was a lot of talk about endings but no mention of future plans. There was uncertainty but no certainty. The absence of these two opposites gave me enough information to frame my story check.



Steve was too far to one end of the pendulum, and he was looking for some balance, but he didn't know how to get back into balance because he wasn't clear on what the issue was.

This raises an important question. Someone Steve knew well might potentially have been diagnosed with a severe illness, or a person close to him was leaving. I was tempted not to say anything.

Even given the agreement we had that I was there to provide him with feedback on what I was hearing, or in this case not hearing, I hesitated for about 10 minutes. But when the same themes kept popping up in his conversation, I decided to go for it.

Suppose I could help him bring the themes into his conscious awareness, he could once again live in the 'and' between uncertainty and certainty, between an ending and a new beginning.

To achieve this, I had at least two choices. One was to do a perception check.

With polarity listening, it's OK to use two feeling words.

Steve, I'm wondering if you are feeling somewhat uncertain or confused about something in your life right now. Would that be right?

The other alternative was a story check.

Steve for the past 30 minutes you have talked a lot about things coming to a conclusion or ending. I am wondering if there is something or someone in your life right now that is stagnant or coming to an end? Is that right?

As I mentioned in the Story Listening video, Steve was surprised by my question, and after some thought, he said no. However, at our next session two weeks later, he walked in with a spring in his step I hadn't seen before. He said, remember you asked me if something was stagnant or coming to an end in my life? Well, there is, and I know what it is. It's my career. I think I want a change.



Suppose your perception or story check is wrong. In that case, it doesn't matter because the person will keep telling you stories with similar themes giving you the chance to make another guess. If that guess is wrong, don't despair. They will keep telling you stories with similar themes until you get it right.

I was explaining this to a woman who was caring for her frail mother. She said, "my mother tells me the same story every day".

If someone tells you the same story time and time again, it means that you haven't heard the meaning of the Story yet.

Steve would have kept telling me and other people stories that contained themes of endings and uncertainty. I was able to help Steve because I have been taught how to listen.

Sometimes the possible meaning of a story I have heard comes to me days later. It doesn't matter because I had the opportunity to pick it up the next time I spoke with them.

People need to be 'heard'. They keep giving you chance after chance in the unconscious hope that someone will hear them. That someone will help them bring into focus the dilemma that is floating so close to the surface of their conscious mind.

Steve was out of balance. When he understood what was happening, he was able to get back into balance, and that is why we listen for the opposites in a person's stories.

Steve did not know the meaning of his words and metaphors.

But, beneath these polarities, these dilemmas are layers of beliefs. Some of these beliefs are valid, but many are obsolete, and this is what we cover next.



This skill enables you to help people recognise their deep-seated belief systems and, if you listen to yourself, you can hear your silent beliefs. When hidden outdated beliefs are transferred into the conscious mind, they can be reassessed, and old beliefs can be discarded.