

# *The How Well Am I Listening? Checklist*

*A tool for training ourselves to get more out of our interactions with students*

In [You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters](#), journalist Kate Murphy proposes a common sense approach to improving the relationship-building power of our conversations -- rather than going through the motions or captaining conversations, Murphy suggests that we **listen**. It sounds obvious, right?

And that's exactly why Murphy invites readers to test how well we listen by answering three simple questions:

1. What did I learn about the person I was speaking with?
2. What was the person most concerned about?
3. How was this person feeling about what we spoke about?

Murphy argues that if we can't answer those three questions, then chances are the person we were speaking with didn't feel very listened to.

Now let's apply this to teaching. Perhaps our most efficiently powerful tool in relationship building is what I call the "moment of genuine connection." It's not something that we leave up to chance -- rather, we keep track of these moments on our class rosters and we make sure to try them with every child that we teach.

But if we're not listening in the way that Murphy describes, then chances are our moments of genuine connection aren't getting as building as much relational capital as they could be; in other words, they aren't leaving students feeling valued, known, respected, and safe -- the hallmarks of a [humanized learning environment](#).

## **How to Use the Checklist**

On the back of this page, you'll find a reproducible checklist of sorts for diagnosing how well you've listened to five conversation partner on a given day. I use this for my interaction with students, but you could use it for interactions with colleagues, parents of students, or your own friends and family members as well.

To start, plan on using the checklist each day for a week. Your goal is to easily and fully answer all of Murphy's questions for five people from your day's conversations. I like to fill this out before finishing work for the day. The point here is to diagnose how well you're listening -- so, be honest and don't fill it in just to get it done. You want to inspect yourself: was I really listening, or was I going through the motions?

I often find in the first week that it takes me a couple days to get to where all five conversations are where they need to be.

After that week, I only use the checklist a couple of times per month. I set a reminder in my calendar to grab a copy and place it on a clipboard for the day. If I find that I struggle at the end of the day to do fill out the questions for 3 or more students, then I know I need to use the checklist again tomorrow. If I'm at 3 or 4 or 5, then I move on. I'm not trying to be perfect. The exercise tends to get me back on track. ([Here's another, more detailed way of doing it.](#))

Remember: we're doing this not because relationships are the point of school, but because relationships are one of a teacher's best tools and greatest rewards in doing the wonderful work we do. For more on this, consider reading my article "[How to Build Strong Relationships with Students if You're Starting the Year Online: Principles and Practices.](#)"

Teaching right beside you,



Dave Stuart Jr.

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<b>NAME</b>	<b>What did I learn about this person?</b>	<b>What was this person most concerned about?</b>	<b>How was this person feeling about what we spoke about?</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			