

## CHAPTER 1

# Shut Up!

“What? You just told me to shut up?”

Yes, I sure did. Someone needs to. If you are like most of the people in the world you are probably talking so much you cannot even hear what is being said. My dad always put it this way: “You are broadcasting when you ought to be tuned in.” In other words, shut your mouth for a minute and pay attention.

That has probably been your biggest problem. You were so busy talking you did not shut up long enough to pay attention. You missed all the important lessons of life.

**“Most of us are so busy running around creating the soap opera and drama we call our lives that we don’t hear anything.”**

**—Louise Hay**

In the New Testament there is a story about Jesus, traveling in a fishing boat with his disciples. A big wind comes up, the waves rise,

and all of the disciples think they're going to die. They awaken Jesus from his nap, whining and crying, and he says, "Hush, be still" (Mark 4:39 KJV). Then he goes on to talk to them about their faith. (But he first has to make the winds, the waves, and the disciples hush.)

When I was growing up, I was often told to "Hush!" I knew exactly what it meant. In fact, the word "hush" has been shortened to "shhhh." (I bet you did not know that, did you? See, you are already learning stuff.) When you hear "hush" or "shhhh" you know it means to be quiet. Actually I think if those words of Jesus were being translated today, they could just as easily be, "Shut up! Be quiet! I'm about to teach you something."

That is what I am saying to you here. Shut up! I am about to teach you something.

## **Shut Up and Listen**

It is impossible to listen while you are talking. It just cannot be done. Yet all of the good information comes to us only when we are quiet and listen. You cannot learn while you are talking. You can only learn when you are listening. So when was the last time you really got quiet and listened? I mean really listened? You should try it some time. You might be amazed at what you hear. Jimi Hendrix once said, "Knowledge speaks but wisdom listens."

### **LISTEN TO OTHERS**

Stop and listen to your spouse or significant other. I do not mean the kind of listening you do when the TV is blaring in the background. I

mean the kind of listening where you stop and hold hands and look into each other's eyes and really listen. This special exchange will take you to new heights in your relationship.

Take some time to listen to your kids. I once read that the average parent spends less than seven minutes a day in direct communication with their children. I know how hard it is to communicate with your kids. I have been there. Especially when you are the parent of a teenager. Sometimes, the last thing your teenager wants to do is talk to you. Usually it is just easier not to talk to them because all they do is make monosyllabic grunts in response to you. Tough. Make them talk. Bug the hell out of them and force the communication if you have to. Both of my sons went through periods when they hated talking to me. How sad for them. I just kept talking and forced them to listen. I made them talk and forced myself to listen, even when what they had to say was hard for me to listen to. For instance, one time my son, Tyler, told me I ought to listen to my own speech. Ouch!

Most people think communication is about talking. That is only a small part of it. Listening is the biggest part. Become very good at it with those you love.

## **LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS**

Earl Nightingale said, "All of the money you are ever going to have is currently in the hands of someone else." In business, we call that "someone else" the customer. They have the money. They share it with us when we serve them well. One of the ways you serve your customers well is by listening to them.

You might be saying you do not really have customers, but we all have customers. You might not call them customers, but you still

have them. You might call them patients, clients, co-workers or the audience, but they are still your customers. Listen to them. They have all of the information necessary for you to serve them, solve their problems, and make them happy. Do those things and you will be rewarded.

### **LISTEN TO THOSE WHO KNOW MORE THAN YOU DO**

Someone knows more than you do. That may be hard for you to believe but it is true. And some of those who know more than you will share that information. Find them. Ask for their help. Do you know what will happen as a result of asking? They will help. No kidding. Most people who have made it are more than willing to help others, but most people do not genuinely ask for help. Instead they whine about how it is. That is much different than a sincere request for information. Very few ask and even fewer do what they are advised. Do not be like that. When you ask, really take the advice that is offered. After all, you are asking someone who knows more than you. Do not waste the exchange.

By the way, do you want to know how to find out if other people know more than you do? Look at their results. Results never lie. If their results are better than yours, then they know something you do not know. Or maybe they are just willing to do more than you are willing to do. In any case, pay attention.

Spend some time with those who are doing better than you. Watch them. Listen to them. Figure out what they are doing and then go do it yourself. If you duplicate their effort, then you will duplicate their results. As my friend Joe Charbonneau said, “Do what the masters do and you will become a master.”

**LISTEN TO THE EXPERTS**

Great speakers, teachers, philosophers, and books are available on audiotape or compact disc—and many are now even available as e-downloads on your computer via various web sites. My best teachers have come to me through audiotapes. And the best thing is that it is just so convenient. Through audiotapes and CDs, my mentors show up on my schedule. I can listen in my car, on an airplane, in my office, or lying by the pool. I heard once that during our lifetime the amount of time spent in our car is the same amount of time it takes to earn the equivalent of four PhD programs. You can use that windshield time to learn how to do almost anything: become rich, more successful, a better leader, or a more effective parent. You name it and I bet there is an audio program available on it. You can even learn how to lose weight by listening to audiotapes—although the best way to lose weight is to stop putting so much food in your mouth!

I have thousands of dollars invested in my audio library. It is one of my most prized possessions. I am convinced that my audio library has had a bigger influence on my life than any other educational source.

**LISTEN TO GREAT MUSIC**

I have a problem with total silence. I wish that were not the case. I would love to be able to sit in total silence and just meditate. I have friends who can do that and they say it is wonderful. Not me, I just cannot do it. So I have learned to listen to meditative music—music that can relax me, music that can inspire me. Some of it causes my mind to become creative. Some of it causes me to become sleepy. Some of it just makes me smile.

Go to a good music store and visit the new age and classical sections. Pick some good instrumental music; put it on the stereo and chill.

I am not asking you to give up your other favorite music. It serves a purpose too. No one should ever ask me to give up Leon Russell, Elvis, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Van Morrison, or the really good rock-n-roll from the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. It is not going to happen. The blues, classical, rock, country, new age, big band (but not rap, I hate that stuff) all serve a purpose and I enjoy listening to most of it. Listen to only good music and learn to enjoy it for different reasons.

## **LISTEN TO YOUR SELF**

Notice I did not say “yourself.” I said “your Self.” I do not mean you should talk to yourself and listen to it—although you do that all the time. I am talking about listening to your higher Self. The “better you” that knows what you ought to be doing. You might call it your conscience. You might call it your “gut.” I do not care what you call it; I just want you to listen to it. It is smarter than you are. It is tuned in at higher levels than you are. It knows! So listen to it. You also might try doing what it says.

## **LISTEN TO GOD**

By the way, that “Higher Self” I was just talking about—that was God. Really. Some folks are not comfortable thinking they might actually have a direct link to God like that. But you do. That Inner Voice—the smart one, the one that likes you, knows what to do, and wants the best for you—that one is God. It is in every one of us. The problem is we do not listen to it. We listen to the other

voice. The one that is full of doubt. That one is not God. That one is you.

## **SOMETIMES, YOU SHOULD NOT LISTEN**

“Wait, first you say to listen and now you are telling me not to listen. Make up your mind. So are there really things I should not listen to?”

Yes. Just like there is a list of things and people you should listen to, there is also a list of things and people you should not listen to:

- Do not listen to someone who is broke tell you how to be rich.
- Do not listen to a fat doctor who smokes tell you what it takes to be healthy.
- Do not listen to someone tell you how to be successful when they are not.
- Do not listen to a preacher tell you that you are worthless sinner.
- Do not listen to people who talk bad about other people.
- Do not listen to office gossip.
- Do not listen to anyone put you down for any reason at any time.
- Do not listen to yourself when you are talking bad about yourself.

This one needs additional explanation. I know I told you to listen to your Self. That is true. But be very careful when you listen to yourself. No one will ever talk as badly about you or to you as you will to yourself. Do your best to control that negative self-talk. When you

catch yourself saying things like “I could never do that” or “I’m not good at that” or “I’m so stupid”—STOP! Regroup and restate what you should be saying to yourself: “I can do this!” and things that move you closer to the result you want, not further from it.

“I get it. Some of this is stuff I already know. So far, not much new information here. When do we get to the good stuff? What’s next?”

Are you ready for the good stuff? I am almost there. But we have to lay some groundwork first. Do not worry. It is about to get ugly. I will not disappoint you.

So what is next? Easy. Stop whining.