RECLAIMING THE LOST ART
OF TRUE CONNECTION

LISTEN
Like you
Mean it

XIMENA VENGOECHEA

1. What brought you to this book? Discuss your motivation for improving your listening skills.

2. What is a listening mindset? How naturally does it come to you? What elements feel most challenging to you?

3. The author describes surface listening as the act of hearing the literal—but not emotional—content of a conversation, often at the expense of our conversation partner's feelings. Surface listening can include behaviors like multitasking, interrupting, projecting, and mentally checking out. How has surface listening impacted your personal and professional relationships? What relationships, scenarios, or conversation topics need the most listening love and attention from you?

4. The author describes empathetic listening as listening with the intent to understand and relate to someone. This involves listening not just for what is said but also for what is meant and what is felt, in order to connect with them. When have you felt most connected to others in conversation? Whose powers of listening were on display? What made them effective?

5. The book contains exercises to help you understand your own listening powers and pitfalls. Which exercises were difficult, and which were easy for you? What did you learn about yourself and your listening habits through the process?

6   How does mindfulness impact good listening? Have you tried to incorporate mindfulness into your everyday conversation? What was the result if so?

7   When our aim is to connect in conversation, we will make most progress if we focus our powers of observation on understanding others' emotions. What are some ways to identify how our conversation partner is feeling? Which method comes most easily to you?

8   What is your default listening mode? Which mode feels furthest from your reach? Give an example of how this presented itself in a recent conversation or situation. What was the impact on the conversation or situation?

9   How is your default listening mode similar to or different from that of friends, family, or coworkers in your life? How might that impact your conversations?

10   Have you ever misinterpreted your conversation partner's needs? In retrospect, what information might you have missed? How might you catch it next time?

11   The author writes, "When in doubt, bear witness." What does this mean? Have you experienced this in a conversation? How did it feel?

12 Connecting questions—questions, and sometimes statements, neutrally framed to elicit an open response—can help us take a conversation deeper. But many of us often accidentally ask disconnecting questions that lead others to a particular response in conversation. Can you think of a time you asked a disconnecting question in conversation? What happened as a result? How could you have used connecting questions instead?

13 What is listener's drain? What are the various ways it manifests? In your own experience, which types of relationships and contexts make you experience listener's drain sooner than others?

14 The author gives several tips to prevent listener's drain: honor your limits, pace yourself, and take time to process. What is the easiest technique for you to implement? The hardest? Why? What other techniques might help?

15 Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to prevent listener's drain, we still experience it. The author offers several tips to recover from listener's drain. Which techniques speak most to you? Are there any techniques not offered in the book that you have found helpful to recover from drain?

16 Throughout the book, the author provides several tools to help readers become more empathetic listeners. Which tools and techniques appeal to you personally, and why?

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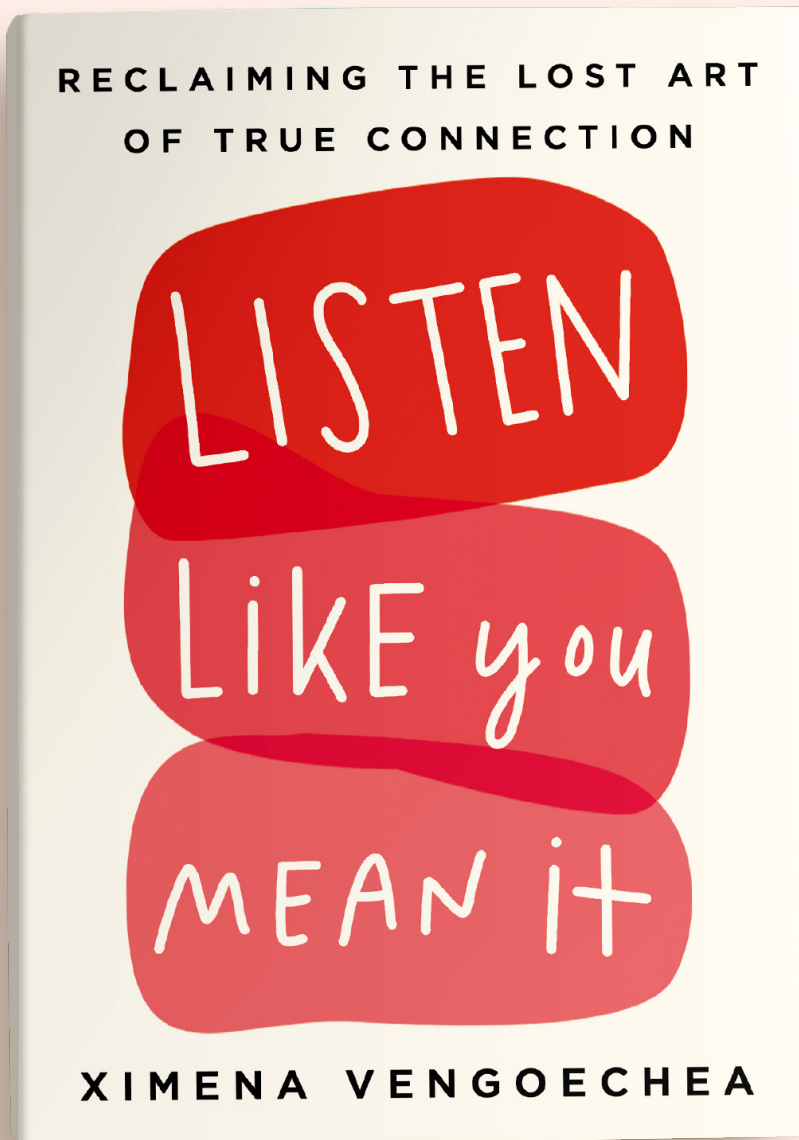
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