

Attunement, Awareness, and Jazz

One night after a jazz concert I complimented the pianist on how subtly he and the vocalist listened and responded to each other. It really was exquisite. He explained that jazz is a conversation. I'd never thought of jazz that way before, but he was exactly right. Their fluid awareness of each other brought a delightful result.

He started me wondering how our lives would change if we saw each relationship as a conversation. What if we all were so interpersonally sensitive? What if our relationships mimicked jazz?

Relational Jazz

Psychologists call such interpersonal awareness “**attunement**” That’s an apt description. When relationships are “out of tune, the participants (one or both) neglect awareness of the other, and “conversations” turn into speeches.

Other interactions can be “out of tune” as well – orchestras, chamber music trios, vocalists and their backup. All need to be in tune or the disharmony at the very least disappoints. Problems with attunement occur in many venues: at the workplace, the within a family, even under the hood of your car (which needs periodic “tune-ups.”)

Interpersonal Attunement

Unselfish attunement enriches relationships immeasurably. Don’t you love to be around someone who not only notices your internal and external shifts but also takes the time to respond with understanding and grace? Such friends give you space to be yourself. Rather than use their awareness to demand from you, they use their awareness to nourish you. In their company *you* feel *present*. You also feel relaxed.

Questions and Prayers

Have you *received* the gift of attunement from others? I pray you will find your life rich with experiencing its beauty. Do you *extend* the gift of attunement to others? I pray that you will become increasingly skilled at offering this gift to those with whom you interact.

