



## Do You Use More Than Your Ears To Listen?

By Andre Burki

**Listening on a deep level is a critical leadership competency. At Burki Leadership, we pride ourselves to use this strength. We also help leaders to discover the benefits of listening with an open mind, open heart and open will - using the multiple brains.**



*Elephants are extremely good at picking up our mood - and this is not thanks to their big ears!*

Key to improvement and success as a leader is the will and capacity to listen on multiple levels by using more than the ears and include the heart and the gut.

The days of one-way communication being the norm are gone. Leaders learn to get their stakeholders to buy-in by involving and listening to them. Customers and employees are often invited to share their opinion. But have they really been listened to?

For good listening: do not rely solely on your ears! Have you ever thought, "There's more to this"? That is your gut and heart brains listening and giving you clues. Why does traditional wisdom recommend to listen to your heart and to consider your gut feeling? Because our ancestors already knew from experience that we pick up information not only with our ears. In fact, we may miss crucial information if we only use our head brain and ignore our heart, and gut feelings! Neuroscience has proven that we have multiple brains. For example, **the gut brain has the same capacity and complexity as the brain of a cat with an average of 500 million neurons** (Marvin Oka & Grant Soosalu, 2012, *mBraining Using Multiple Brains to Do Cool Stuff*).

Deep listening takes effort. An effort to be open minded, open hearted and having the will to act. It invites us to be mindful and have the willingness to challenge our own beliefs and to be vulnerable. **It takes courage to allow ambiguity** by listening to multiple sources: What does the head brain tell, how does the heart feel, what does the gut pick-up which is often expressed by a sensation, e.g. tensions, nausea or butterflies? And yes, it may get a bit messy and adventurous should you have to deal with different messages from each intelligence centre. **But only a curious, creative head brain, aligned with a compassionate heart and courageous gut brain will create a sustainable next successful step** – especially in this world of uncertainty and multiple truths.

Listening with the curiosity of head brain, with the compassion of the heart brain and the courage of the gut brain is a very **powerful development tool** for improving self-leadership and generative leadership skills not only for individuals but also for the collective leadership of a team or organisation.

It is amazing what new emergent new possibilities you will discover when you let go of knowing and apply deep listening using head-, heart- and gut-brain.