

I really appreciated the Triads and the format and structure it was conducted in. I have been in previous Triads before but without the structure and designated and descriptive roles. The roles of listener, observer, and speaker allows for each person in the structure to learn to operate at different levels and capacities. I learned the significance of each role as we took turns.

As a listener, and even sometimes as an observer, sometimes I can tell when someone is dying to interject, interrupt and talk about themselves or give advice, even though they are the listener. Listeners are challenged to focus only on the speaker. It is also important for listeners to learn how to affirm and validate through non-verbal cues to show how interested and engaged one is with what is being discussed. As listeners, I learned that it is key to listen well and help the speaker feel heard so that trust can be built. Having trust and creating a safe space to talk are essential to allowing the speaker to practice vulnerability. The listener's role is so important and dictates and impacts how a speaker chooses what to talk about.

A good listener also makes observations and insights to ask good questions. I recognized that there is permission to ask questions for clarification. Listeners are not expected to have the answers but rather, are people to be a bouncing sounding board, for the speaker to hear themselves and understand themselves clearer and deeper. I witnessed and experienced David and Kelly ask questions that allowed the speaker to talk more specifically. As a group, we picked up on certain language or words and emotions that were used to describe a part of the story. We would take mental or physical notes on these observations. We then would validate and state our observations to lead into a question. This was strategic for us and we learned to be assertive and direct with our approach. Because of the trust that we have built, together we sensed that the

questions were out of kindness, love and grace, for the sake of one another becoming healthier people.

As the speaker, I observed how easy and challenging it is for each person. For David, it was easy for him to talk about himself and sometimes even hard for him to stop talking. His story would jump all over the place and can be hard to follow but you can tell how much he wanted to be heard and have a space to talk freely. It revealed to us as the listener and observer that David was longing for this space. For Kelly, when she first began talking about what she had been wrestling with, she spoke more about others and the situation around her, than necessarily about what she was feeling and thinking about. Some may interpret that as her being reserved or withholding information intentionally. Once I, as the listener, pointed out this observation and asked her questions to challenge her to describe how she was feeling, her raw and genuine emotions would come out.

When I was speaking, David and Kelly were able to draw to my attention the emotions that were stirring within me. I was not aware of the tone and attitude I was speaking in about a certain person and situation in my life. When David as a listener, asked me questions about unforgiveness, I was confused at first but eventually as he kept asking me the same question but in different ways, I realized he was trying to help me become aware of my feelings and thoughts. His observations, along with Kelly's head nods, both helped me gain self awareness about the situation I was describing. Speakers can learn more about themselves as they say things out loud to another person.

I think observers have a fun job as they get to be a little more relaxed and people-watch. I enjoyed people watching and recognized that as an observer, I can still jump to conclusions. Sometimes David and I, as observers, our body language shows how much we want to jump into

the conversation but we choose to restrain ourselves to practice being present in the moment in our roles. We both would consciously shift our inner self talk to take in the moment. We would practice being present by taking notes on observations to help us to slow down. We would all use our notes and not overtake notes. Our notes would allow us to share reflections with one another and constructive feedback. Our group dynamic as observers, displayed body language that was affirmation and validating to show the speaker that we were truly listening.

I personally enjoyed that the observer is also someone who gives a positive presence. I enjoyed being an observer the most because it challenges me to be a better listener at the same time. I learned to be assertive in my constructive feedback. I felt affirmed and seen when Kelly and David would affirm that I spoke honestly and out of love. It helped me feel like I wasn't a crazy person and that my perception of myself is in alignment to what they saw and experienced from me as well. It was redeeming and restoring for me. As someone who's been told and confronted for being harsh in my words, hearing from new and different people who affirmed that my delivery is assertive with love and kindness, was exactly what I needed to hear to continue being courageous in my relationships with others.

I really enjoyed my triad experience with Kelly and David. It was encouraging to watch one another develop and apply what we have been taught. The experience allowed me to be courageous in my approaches with relationships and continued to affirm that I need new and different friends in my life. The experience was what my soul has been longing for in friendships, specifically relationships in the christian community. I will continue to practice these skills in my life and teach others how to apply this model.