



Whole Body Listening: Time for Change

Whole Body Listening Larry has been a familiar face in classrooms for over 12 years, and we are excited to announce that big changes for the resources are in the works! This first big change is to the Whole Body Listening poster. Instead of providing strategies that promote rule-following around listening, Larry now wants to help kids focus on self-awareness, regulation and advocacy. We need to shift from an outdated model that enforces certain behaviors and standards to an inclusive model that teaches and encourages listeners to identify what their unique brain and body need in order to regulate, listen, learn, and connect. We are grateful for the information and advocacy of the Neurodivergent community who inspired this change in the Whole Body Listening resources.

To provide some background, the concept of Whole Body Listening was developed in 1989 by Susan Truesdale, following a conversation with her first grade class about the difference between “hearing” and “listening.” She wanted to help break down one of the most critical, challenging, and abstract components of social communication and learning: listening. In 2010, we adapted Truesdale’s core concept to explore whole body listening as a multifaceted and multisensory process involving all the body parts including ears, brain, eyes, mouth, hands, feet, body position, and heart. The intention was to break down the abstract and complex process so children would better understand what was being asked of them when told to “pay attention” and “listen to me.” We created Whole Body Listening Larry to introduce the concept to children in what we felt was an engaging and age-appropriate manner.

However, these resources created standards for listening *behaviors* (i.e., eyes looking at speaker, hands quiet in your lap), rather than teaching students how each body part can support their listening needs. A model for compliance was created, instead of a model that allowed each individual to understand how **they** listen and learn in the most effective way for their unique self. This approach ultimately further marginalized Neurodivergent behaviors such as atypical eye contact, flapping hands, and/or fidgeting. Atypical listening behaviors were viewed as inferior or incorrect strategies, which fed stereotypes we want to steer away from.

Active listening and processing can look many different ways. Some people listen best when they move around, look away, fidget with their hands, or have a quiet space. These various forms of listening and learning needs are not deficits—they are differences. When we provide insight and tools to help children become aware of their specific needs regarding how to regulate their body for listening, we ultimately empower them to understand and advocate for themselves.

We recognize our responsibility in revising the Larry resources to align with the neurodiversity paradigm and reflect current interpersonal neurobiology research. We are listening, learning, and growing. We want to take a stand against harmful stereotypes, ableism, discrimination, and social prejudices that devalue individuals because of their needs or diagnosis. At Everyday Regulation we are committed to changing old attitudes and assumptions in order to make schools truly inclusive. We invite you to explore these new resources and to grow along with us.

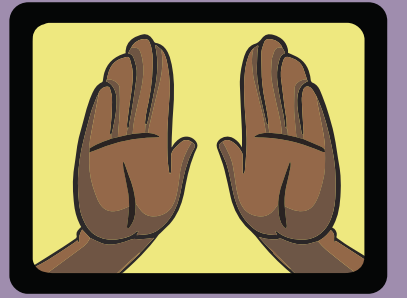


WHOLE BODY LISTENING

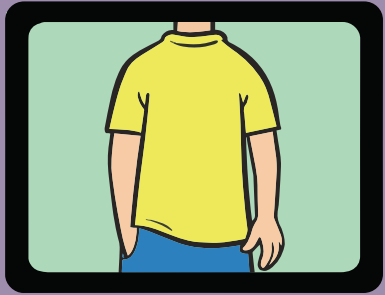
How Does Your Body Help You Listen?



My eyes help me listen when...



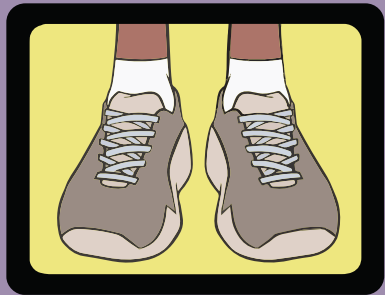
My hands help me listen when they...



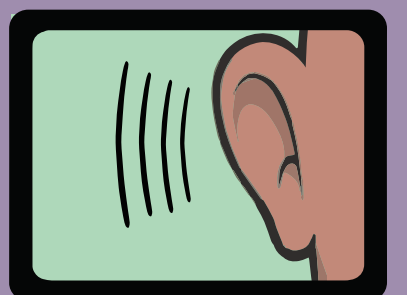
My body helps me listen when it can...



My heart can help me listen when...



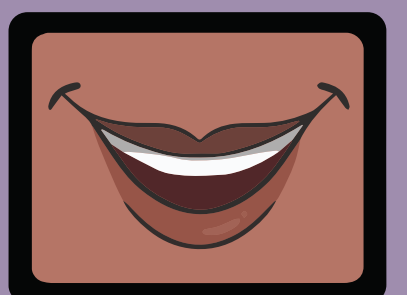
My feet help me listen when they...



My ears listen when...



My brain can help me listen by...



When I am listening my mouth is...



All brains and bodies listen and learn differently.
It is important to know what works for YOU!

How to Use the Whole Body Listening Poster

This Whole Body Listening poster is designed to help individuals discover and advocate for how they best listen and learn. Each learner can complete their own personal poster, one large poster can be completed during a whole-class discussion, or a combination of both.

It is important to help your learners reflect on their listening needs as individuals, as well as the needs of their classroom community. What can they do when their listening needs conflict with a peer's listening needs? Facilitate conversations about self-advocacy and work collaboratively to brainstorm ways **all** learners can get their listening needs met.

The purpose of this resource is to allow learners to reflect on what helps them be an engaged listener. As the adult facilitator, make sure you are not guiding discussion towards a singular "standard" of listening, but rather helping learners truly identify the variety of ways they use their body to listen. Here are a few examples of how different learners may listen:

- My **eyes** help me listen when...
 - they are looking at the speaker
 - they are looking down at the ground
 - they are looking at visual/written supports
 - they are closed



- My **hands** help me listen when they...
 - fidget
 - flap
 - stay in my lap
 - doodle
 - are in my pockets



- When I am listening, my **mouth** is...
 - humming quietly
 - echoing
 - quiet
 - chewing
 - asking questions



- My ears listen when...
 - it is quiet
 - music plays
 - there is white noise
 - I wear ear defenders



- My **feet** help me listen when they...

- tap
- pace
- bounce
- stand
- are still



- My **heart** can help me listen when...

- I meet my listening needs while considering the needs of my community
- show others I care in my unique way
- considering the perspectives of others



- My **brain** can help me listen by...

- thinking about the message it receives
- Noticing distractions, then letting them go
- understanding others in a unique way



- My **body** helps me listen when it can...

- bounce
- sit on cushion
- lean on something
- feel wrapped up
- sit away from others

