

Participating with Greg Mooers

He was supposed to speak to several hundred people. It was booked weeks in advance, but was held a few days after Sept. 11, 2001. Whatever the speaker had planned to say that day probably would not have worked. Fortunately, **Greg Mooers** hadn't planned to say anything.

Mooers was introduced simply as "The Speaker Who Listens." His eight years of living as a monk and his work as an engineer at Intel were not mentioned.

He opened by saying, "How does it feel when someone is deeply interested in you without an ulterior motive? And how does a "know-it-all" make you feel? See, if I stand up here and talk at you, I'll probably lose your interest, so instead, I'm going to get interested in you."

There was a long pause.

"I'm going to give you one of the best presentations you've ever had, and I don't even know what the topic is. So, tell me, what do you really want to talk about today? Anyone?"

"Anthrax!" said one woman. Others nodded in agreement.

Mooers wrote "Anthrax" on the top of the flipchart. "There are five things everyone needs to know about Anthrax. What is one of them?" he asked the crowd.

Hands went up. Greg listened closely to each suggestion and relied on the group's responsiveness to weigh the importance of each answer. He made headings of the most popular, such as, "How is Anthrax Spread?" "Anthrax Prevention" and "Curing Anthrax," with subheadings of other suggestions. One person had a toll-free number for an Anthrax hotline. Everyone wrote it down.

By the end, everyone knew a lot more about Anthrax—and even more about listening. And that's the point. Whatever the topic, audiences learn about listening by having someone listen to them. As one person said, "I'm going to try this with my kids!"

*Greg Mooers can be reached at
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