

Listen

~ *Anonymous*

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice,
You have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me 'why' I shouldn't feel that way,
You are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something to solve my problems,
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen;
Not talk, nor do – just hear me.
And I can do for myself – I'm not helpless
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me, that I can and need to do for myself,
You contribute to my fear and weakness.
But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
No matter how irrational
Then I quit trying to convince you
And can get about the business of understanding
What's behind this irrational feeling.
When that's clear,
The answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.
Perhaps that's why prayer works sometimes for some people;
because God is mute, and doesn't give advice to try to 'fix' things,
He/She just listens, and lets you work it out for yourself.
So please listen, and just hear me, and if you want to talk,
Wait a minute for your turn,
And I'll listen to you.

Per Ralph Roughton, MD, this poem was written by a mental health consumer who was institutionalized over a number of years in Queensland. The author wishes to remain anonymous.