

URBAN CONFESSIONAL

A FREE LISTENING PROJECT

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Listening is Free, Being Heard is Priceless

Grassroots movement connects world through power of listening

LOS ANGELES, March 22, 2016 -- Nearly four million people live in Los Angeles. It should be easy to find someone to listen to you. But [Benjamin Mathes](#) says that's not so, and he's increasingly distressed that people everywhere are so disconnected. He's determined to get L.A., and the world, listening – to each other.

That's why Monday, April 11, 2016, has been declared [#FreeListeningDay](#), an offshoot of Mathes' [Urban Confessional](#), a virtual enterprise designed to foster no-strings-attached, free listening. Urban Confessional encourages listening 365 days a year. But on April 11, hundreds of free listeners will take to the streets throughout the United States and the world. It will be a day to connect, to heal and to cope with the planet's craziness.

What does free listening look like? Imagine everyday people holding a cardboard sign with the words "Free Listening" scrawled in marking pen. Imagine passersby glaring at a listener skeptically, at first, but then gradually stopping to talk – about anything.

Mathes, 36, an L.A.-based film producer and acting studio proprietor, explains that no money changes hands and no promises are made. This is not therapy. No one is recording. It's not a reality show. It's reality.

Urban Confessional is a growing grassroots movement, open to anyone, anywhere. Listeners are found as far away as South Africa and as close as downtown Los Angeles. The first listening day in 2015 generated free listening in 13 countries. In the U.S., listeners held impromptu "listening stations" in 20 cities across seven states.

Since being launched four years ago, Urban Confessional has grown by leaps and bounds, fueled primarily through social media. And Mathes expects year two of Free Listening Day to dwarf last year's initial effort.

"April 11 will be extremely special this year when literally hundreds of people will stop and take time to listen to others who need to talk. And with hundreds of listeners, we expect to impact thousands of individuals who deserve to be heard."

Mathes says listening yields healing – for the speaker and the listener. “Listening heals on both sides and is a tremendous way to cope with the insanity happening all around us. From this year’s divisive political campaigns and tragic terrorist attacks here and abroad, to everyday incidents that test our patience, just being listened to is soothing,” Mathes said.

Listeners and talkers report that free listening helps them cope with the stresses and pressures everyone encounters daily. Free listeners do not give advice. They just listen, temporarily connected to another human being in a world where meaningful connections are becoming extinct. Sure, we’re all connected to our Smart Phone contacts, but where’s the meaning in that?

Mathes encourages anyone and everyone to become a listener on #FreeListeningDay. Go to www.freelisteningday.org. View the simple guidelines. With a simple piece of cardboard and a black marking pen, listeners are equipped to change the world.

Mathes adds, “If you go outside on April 11 and see someone standing with a homemade #FreeListening sign, head over and just let it out. You’ll feel good, that I promise.”

About Urban Confessional

Born on the streets of Los Angeles, Calif., Urban Confessional began as a community of actors determined to challenge the status quo. Every week, they stood on street corners in LA with signs that read “Free Listening” and opened their hearts to anyone who needed to laugh, cry, scream, or chat. Over the years, the community has grown to include people from all walks of life across 6 continents, 13 countries and 20 states. For more information, visit www.urbanconfessional.org.