
Mindful Communication: The Art of Listening & Speaking

Objectives

- Define the elements of communication and the components of mindful listening and speaking
- Learn how to put mindful communication practices to use
- Converse and connect with fellow Dorm parents

Elements of Communication

Messenger, message, recipient

- **Verbal communication:** spoken & written communication using words or symbols to share a meaning
- **Nonverbal communication** involves the transfer of messages through nonverbal means such as:
 - body language (kinesics; examples gesture, stance, facial expressions, eye contact, movement, etc.)
 - proxemics (distance/personal space)
 - haptics (communication through touch)
- **Paraverbal communication** conveys meaning through the vocal part of the speech, not including the actual words used. Key components:
 - tone (quality & pitch)
 - volume (loudness & intensity)
 - cadence (rhythm & rate of speech)

Mindfulness + Key Attitudes

“Paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)

“Process of openly attending, with awareness, to one’s present moment experience.” (Creswell, 2017)

- **Beginner's mind:** never experienced this conversation or situation before
- **Non-judgment:** create space between what’s happening and how you think or feel about it, avoid labels good/bad/neutral
- **Curiosity:** approach with interest
- **Patience:** active listening, accept delay

Mindfulness + Communication

Mindful Communication: apply mindfulness principles to correspondence with others

Common Components

1. Presence/awareness
2. Intention
3. Attention
4. Non-judgment

- Awareness of what others are saying (listening)
- Awareness of your interpretations (assumptions/judgments)
- Awareness of your own needs/reactions.

Goal: increase our presence and therefore the productiveness of the conversation.

Using skills to support conversing about challenging topics can create for more space for discussion, leading to less volatile – or stifled – interactions, and more ability to accept whatever the conversation brings up.

Applying Mindfulness to Communication: Everyday Skills

Mindful Listening

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.” – Stephen Covey

Goal: understand the message of the speaker/messenger

Non-mindful/full minded listening: attention diverted away from present moment, judgments cloud hearing, focus shifts to self/ego, etc..

Common roadblocks

1. Comparing
2. Mind Reading
3. Rehearsing
4. Judging

Mindful Speaking

“The way you speak to others can offer them joy, happiness, self-confidence, hope, trust, and enlightenment. Mindful speaking is a deep practice.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Goal: stay on topic, effectively communicate your message, & notice how others are responding.
Clarify message if needed

Mindful speaking: awareness of what you're saying & how you are using nonverbal communication to support your message

Engage with self-inquiry. What makes me say what I am saying?

Skills for Mindful Listening

- Allow silence! Welcome silence!
- Embrace key attitudes of mindfulness, especially
 - Beginner's mind
 - Curiosity
 - Non-judgment
 - Patience
 - Compassion & Kindness
- Engage in non-verbals: eye contact, nodding, facing towards person
- Check for understanding
- Acronym **RASA**
 - **Receive**: pay attention
 - **Appreciate**: use non-verbals to demonstrate
 - **Summarize**: reflect back what you heard
 - **Ask**: ask questions, stay curious

Skills for Mindful Speaking

- Follow the 2/3 rule': is it **True? Necessary? Kind?**
- Connect to your intention/purpose. Know the message you are trying to get across.
- **Pause!** Slow Down & Take a breath.
- Fully arrive. Are you present in the moment? Limit distractions, redirect attention
- Observe recipient/s; observe yourself
- **WAIT** acronyms
 - Why AM I Talking?
 - Why aren't I talking?
- Embrace key attitudes
 - Acceptance
 - Gratitude

Things to consider...

- Communication in **digital age**
 - Text messages, calls, voice messages/notes, emails
 - Your comfort/familiarity with digital messages
 - Missed cues/miscommunication
- **Timing** of response
 - Responding promptly
 - Acknowledging receipt of a message
 - Personal **boundaries**
- Be aware of your own thoughts, feelings, behavioral reactions

Ex: Your loved one leaves you a message in the middle of the night; How do you respond?

Ex: Your loved one keeps calling you, however, you are at work; how do you respond?

Ex: Your loved one send you a voice note instead of calling; do you have a reaction to this mode of communication?

Discussion Questions

What feels like the most difficult part of embracing mindfulness in communication for you?

What was a recent communication mishap that may have had a different outcome had one or both parties practiced mindful speaking & listening?

Do you have any verbal or non-verbal triggers in communication with your loved one?