

# Practicing 6 Points of Mindful Speech

At work, home, and everywhere in between, communication is a critical component of our everyday interactions. Clear communication is essential for creating and maintaining healthy relationships in our lives, where all parties feel that they are understood. Despite how important this is, most of us rarely take time to think about our communication styles and habits, and how they may be affecting ourselves and those around us. We often fall into certain patterns or communicate reactively, rather than pausing to consider if what we are saying— and how we are saying it— is what we really mean.

Communicating mindfully is the key, and while this may not come naturally to most of us, we can practice and hone these skills over time. There are many helpful practices for developing mindful communication skills, and a great place to start is to learn about Chogyam Trungpa's '6 points of mindful speech.' These 6 points will help build awareness around our typical communication styles (and that of others), and are guideposts to foster respect, mutual collaboration, and a two-way dialogue.

1. **Precision:** Enunciate clearly and speak deliberately. When we feel nervous or uncertain, we may talk in circles, trail-off, or speak quickly. This makes it difficult for others to hear us, leading to frustration on both ends. Pause, take a breath, and speak precisely. It is better to take your time and convey your message loud and clear, than to rush through a conversation and leave with more confusion than when you started.

2. **Simplicity:** Choose words well. Building on the first point, it is important to be clear and direct. We tend to add filler words or ramble (especially when nervous or insecure), which distracts from the actual message we want to deliver. Instead of talking for the sake of talking, practice viewing words as precious and choose them with intention.
3. **Pace:** Speak slowly and without aggression. The important distinction here is to be mindful of if we tend to *hand* our words to others, or *throw* them. Becoming aware of how words are delivered is just as important as the words themselves, as this affects the tone and emotional atmosphere of the conversation. Communication is not only about what we say to others, but perhaps more importantly, how we make them feel.
4. **Silence:** Honor silence as a valuable part of speech. This point is particularly relevant in the age of technology, where moments of pure silence are rare as we remain plugged in to email, social media, and games. This has caused us to view silence as something to be avoided at all costs, especially when we are with others. A natural lull in the conversation is usually branded as an 'awkward silence,' but what if we viewed this as an opportunity to pause and notice our thoughts instead of clamoring to find words? Becoming comfortable with silence, and allowing our words to be informed by a bit of space, will create a more meaningful conversation than simply talking just to fill the silence.
5. **Observe Others:** Really *listen* to others. Pay attention to not only what they are saying, but the texture, tone, and quality of their speech. Be fully present and notice any nonverbal elements they are expressing, as these can carry valuable information. When we observe others in this way, it helps us to really understand their emotions, feelings, and intentions beyond what their words alone suggest. When others sense that we are truly present and listening to them (instead of just nodding while planning out a reply in our heads!), we can build trust and connection.
6. **Observe Yourself:** Be mindful of your own speech. By paying close attention to what we are saying, and how we are saying it, we can ensure that it is in alignment with our intentions and feelings. A self check-in can help us notice the sensations that arise when we are speaking— are we

delivering the complete message that we want to send? By practicing this mindful awareness, we can use our speech to clarify, unite, and uplift those with whom we are communicating.

Now that you are familiar with the 6 points of mindful speech, give it a try in your next conversation and see if you notice any subtle differences. For most of us who don't frequently pay attention to these aspects of communication, this can seem a bit overwhelming at first. But, it's helpful to view this as a continued practice, rather than a lofty goal to be mastered 'one day' down the road. Experiment with bringing different types of mindful awareness to your conversations in small and tangible ways, and you will begin to notice gradual yet powerful improvements in yourself—and your relationships—over time.

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