

8 Ways To Master The Art Of Mindful Communication

By [Elyane Youssef](#) on Saturday February 25th, 2017



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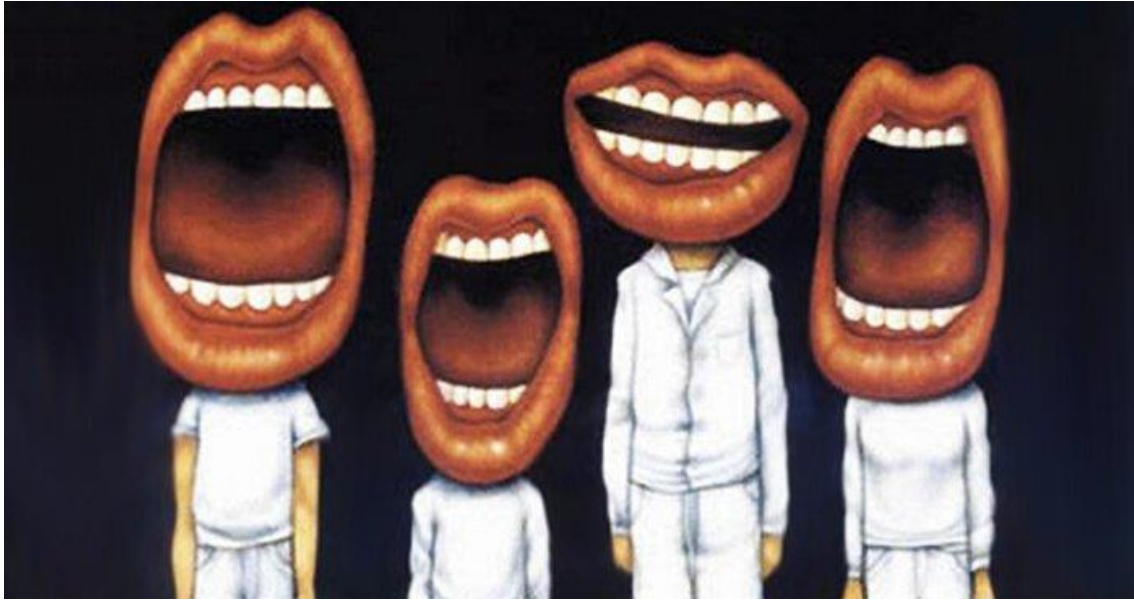
How Well Do You Communicate?

Communication is essential to achieve successful human interactions. However, the type of communication we have highly determines the outcome of our relationships. It all simply boils down to *how* we are connecting with each other.

[Jamyang Khyentse](#) once said something intriguing about human communication:

We think that we have successful communication with others. In fact, we only have successful miscommunication without being aware of it.

Applying mindful communication was almost non-existent for me in the past. Putting an end to ‘the successful miscommunications’ — as Khyentse puts it — was (and still is, at times) arduous. Truth be told, most of the discussions we have with others aren’t really mindful. [Mindful](#) discussion means shedding attention and awareness on our words — it’s rarely what we do, as our ego is consistently involved.



We rarely communicate with the attention and awareness that we should.

My relationships with others flourished when I taught myself the art of mindful communication. Throughout the years, I took note of what bothered me, and others, when communicating. I tried to investigate what engages us in conversations, versus what pushes us away.

How I Learned to Communicate Successfully

1. Listen

When I was a teenager, I had the habit of interrupting people as they spoke, so I could respond. As I grew up, I came to notice how much people pull away during conversations when we don't [properly listen](#) to them.

Listening is the first step toward mindful communication. To mindfully listen means to wait patiently for the other person to finish *before* we speak. Also, it means keeping our mind focused on the speaker, instead of wandering away.



Properly listening to each other is a vital component of successful communication.

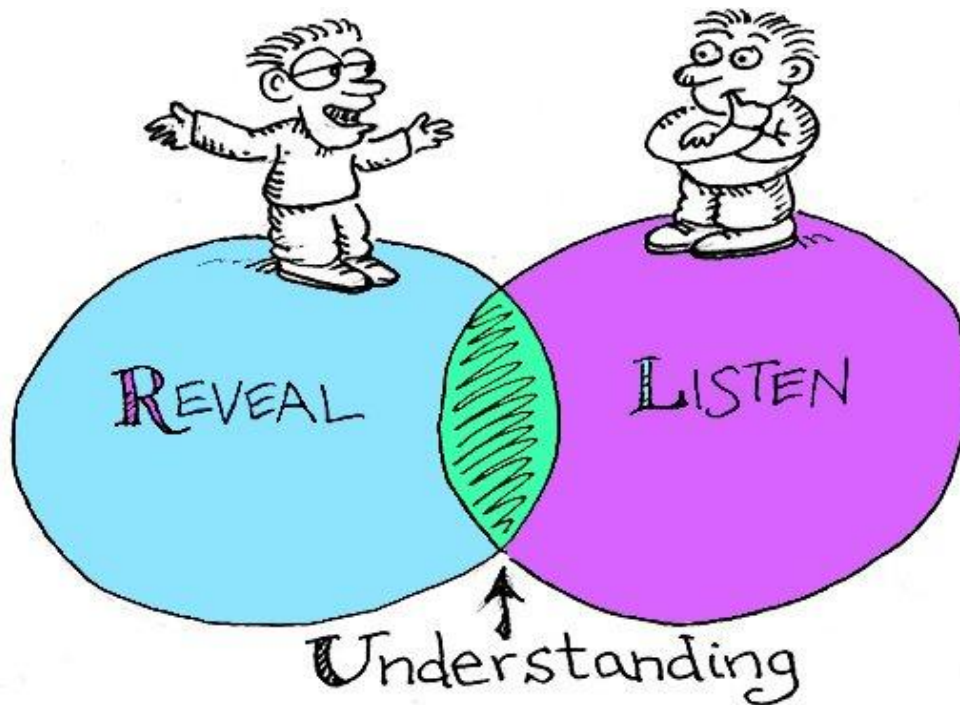
2. Practise non-judgment

I was a mediator a few times in my life. Having been one, I learned something super important: there are always two sides to the story, and neither one of them is necessarily right or wrong. People who are in conflict or disagreement tend to [judge each other](#) during communication. Even when we are on good terms with others, we unconsciously judge them because we don't see their side of the story.

To mindfully converse and avoid conflicts, we need to try our best to refrain from judging the other person's opinion, story or perspective. We should come to terms with the fact that there is no wrong or right — only different perceptions.

3. Show understanding

I met a psychologist on one occasion in Nepal, who explained to me the importance of showing others that we understand them. He clarified how he uses this technique with his patients. When they tell him their issues, the first thing he says is, "I understand" or "I see what you mean." It gives them a sense of comfort that their words and feelings are relatable. You see, at the end of the day, we just want to be understood. Applying the non-judgment technique above allows us to see the bigger picture, and in doing so, helps us to understand their perspective.



You can demonstrate that you understand someone by relaying their feelings to them in your own words.

4. Put yourself in their shoes

I remember hearing a lot of “you’re not in my shoes” or “put yourself in my shoes.” To be ‘in someone else’s shoes’ is to respect their experience by imagining it’s us instead of them. When we do this, we develop a better idea of what they’re feeling. We don’t have to wait for them to ask us if we’re getting what they’re saying. What I do is imagine myself in the experience of the other person, which helps me – again – to cultivate understanding.

5. Be totally there

One of the things that bothers me the most is when I’m with communicating with someone who’s not ‘there’. Since I have realized how disrespectful it is, I’ve tried my best to **be present** in my conversations.

Not being present during communication can range from checking smartphones, watching TV or engaging in anything else during the actual discussion. To have a successful communication, we should put our activities aside and totally be with the person who’s talking.



Imagining you are in your confider's situation helps you to be able to express compassion.

6. The first response shouldn't be personal

This used to be one of my greatest faults in the past. I've come to notice that most of us do it unconsciously. When it's time to respond back, we tend to reply with a personal answer. We either tell a personal story or explain how we intimately feel about it. While it's significant to back up our response with personal feelings and stories, it's **better not to express them at first**. I learned the hard way that the first response must relate to the speaker. "I understand" — as mentioned earlier — can be a good place to start. Then we can ask the person how they feel about it, what they are going to do, or ask them to elaborate.

7. Let go of results

When I was younger I was very competitive, especially when it came to discussions. Come what may, I was determined to be the one winning the discussion. I expected a result. I estimated that people would have to agree with me. I only stopped this habit when I realized that waiting for a result in discussions drains us of energy and in return, kills the communication.



T.H.I.N.K. before you speak – is it True? Helpful? Inspiring? Necessary? Kind?

We should engage in conversations more lightly if we truly wish to mindfully communicate. Not taking things personally and responding in a non-aggressive way are good baby steps toward accomplishing this goal.

8. Don't harm.

Harsh speech is one of the most important precepts in Buddhism. The thing I have enjoyed the most while studying [Buddhism](#) is how they insist on remaining kind and compassionate with other people during communication.

It is not necessary to harm others when we are talking to them. Buddhists believe that every harmful word that comes out of our mouths is a double-edged sword; it will hurt us as much as it will hurt others.