

Week 6 - Mindfulness and Communication

Mountain & Lake Meditations



Listening is the art of entering the skin of the other
and wearing it for a time as if it were your own.

- David Spangler -

Listening & Dealing with Conflict

Most of us don't really listen very deeply when we are in conversation. As Tara Brach says in **The Sacred Art of Listening**: *"We spend most of our moments when someone is speaking, planning what we're going to say, evaluating it, trying to come up with our presentation of our self, or controlling the situation. Pure listening is a letting go of control. It's not easy and takes training... The bottom line is when we are listened to, we feel connected. When we're not listened to, we feel separate."*

Effective communication with those who we disagree with is extraordinarily difficult. If you are like most people, you have a fall-back strategy to deal with conflict that was learned early in life, one that is habitual and embedded in interactions with others. The three most common strategies are: **accommodate** ("be nice"), **demand** ("me first"), or **withdraw** ("I don't care"). There is a fourth way, one that involves investigating both your world and the other's world, that can sometimes yield a surprising and creative solution that honors both worlds. In the martial art, Aikido, this would be called **blending**, a move that harms neither party and turns conflict into more of a dance than a fight. This is complex and an art form in itself, and forms the basis of Marshall Rosenberg's **Non-Violent Communication (NVC)**, something that is briefly introduced this week.

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If you were to consider all the truly stressful situations in your life, you'd probably find that many, if not most, involve other people. This week, we focus on communication and what it means to be mindful in our interactions with others, whether it be family members, co-workers or neighbors. Our focus up until now has been on our internal world (thoughts, feelings and sensations); now we move from the intra-personal to the inter-personal, taking into account another's world, and the place where their world and ours meet. This means recognizing that "the other" (person or persons) have their own perceptions, feelings and needs, which are almost certainly different than ours.

Videos

In the short but powerful video, **Deep Listening**, Frank Ostaseski suggests listening not just from our head and ears, but also from our heart and body, and in **The Power of Empathy in Communication**, Ann Weiser Cornell tells a wonderful story about how a little girl's melt-down in a day-care is transformed by a single expression of empathy, a lesson that is applicable even in the boardroom or politics. In **The Art of Being Heard**, Susan Piver describes three principles of mindful communication (timing, listening, agenda-less-ness). In the next two videos, Tara Brach talks about **The Sacred Art of Listening**, and in **Awakening Through Conflict**, she begins to answer the question of how one deals with conflict in communication. When dealing with others, blame is easy and empathy difficult, so it's perfect that the videos end with two short but powerful animations, **Blame** and **Empathy**, both narrated by Brené Brown.

Reading

Included in the reading is a written companion to the video above by Tara Brach, also called **The Sacred Art of Listening**. Anger is sometimes confused with hatred and identified as an emotion that a "spiritual" person would not have. Sylvia Boorstein clarifies this misunderstanding with **The Most Frequently Asked Question**. Our typical way of dealing with anger is to either externalize it or stuff it, and in **The Answer to Anger** Pema Chodron describes a powerful middle way, neither exploding nor imploding. **Conflict Management Styles** describes the four ways of dealing with conflict outlined above (accommodate, demand, withdraw, blend), and **The Heart of Non-Violent Communication (NVC)** by Marshall Rosenberg, is an introduction to NVC, a skillful way of communicating in difficult situations. For those wishing to know more about NVC, see the Supplementary Materials.

Daily Practices

This week, we introduce the **Mountain Meditation** and the **Lake Meditation**, one of which we suggest you try at least once this week, in place of one of your normal 30 minute practices. These are both shorter practices (20 min), so on the day you do one of these meditations, you will have a shorter practice session (if you'd like a full 30 minutes, you can add 10 minutes of silent meditation on your own that day).

For the **formal practice** this week, we are now at a point where you can freely choose between any of the three main practices you've experienced so far: Body Scan, Sitting Meditation, Yoga (and the Mountain Meditation or Lake Meditation at least one day).

The **informal practices** up until now have been focusing on the intra-personal (what's happening inside you) and now we begin paying attention to the inter-personal, using the **Communication Calendar**, noticing what happens when we bring mindfulness to relationships.

Week 6 Materials

Video List

- ☐ [Deep Listening](#) - video by Frank Ostaseski [3 min]
- ☐ [The Power of Empathy in Communication](#) - Ann Weiser Cornell [2 min]
- ☐ [The Art of Being Heard](#) - Susan Piver [4 min]
- ☐ [The Sacred Art of Listening](#) - Tara Brach [19 min]
- ☐ [Awakening Through Conflict](#) - Tara Brach [9 min]
- ☐ [Blame](#) - narrated by Brené Brown [3 min]
- ☐ [Empathy](#) - narrated by Brené Brown [3 min]

Reading List

- ☐ [The Sacred Art of Listening](#) - Tara Brach
- ☐ [The Most Frequently Asked Question](#) - Sylvia Boorstein
- ☐ [The Answer to Anger](#) - Pema Chodron
- ☐ [Conflict Management Styles](#) - summary of communication styles
- ☐ [The Heart of Nonviolent Communication \(NVC\)](#) - Marshall Rosenberg

Practice Sheets

- ☐ [Formal Practice \[PDF\]](#) [or [WORD format](#)] - [Body Scan](#), [Sitting Med.](#), [Yoga](#) (and [Mountain](#) or [Lake Med.](#))
- ☐ [Informal Practice \[PDF\]](#) [or [WORD format](#)] - [Communication Calendar](#)

All of the guided practices can be found through the top menu

Supplementary materials related to this week's topic [optional]

- [Empathy in Communication](#) - video by Ann Weiser Cornell [7 min]
- [AH, FOWL - Transforming Anger](#) - adapted from Barbara De Angelis' "Love Letters"
- [Listening with Ears of the Heart](#) - video by Tara Brach [12 min]
- [What Really Makes Us Happy](#) - video of Robert Waldinger [13 min]
- [Non-Violent Communication](#) - video narrated by Marshall Rosenberg [6 min]
- [Non-Violent Communication interview](#) - interview of Marshall Rosenberg [21 min]
- [Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life](#) - book by Marshall Rosenberg
- [Intimate Relationship as a Spiritual Crucible](#) - article by John Welwood
- [Tuning In: Tips on how to be a good listener](#) - article by David Rome
- [E-Mail Is Easy to Write \(and to Misread\)](#) - article by Daniel Goleman
- [A 4-Step Guide to Ranting Productively](#) - New York Times article by Carl Richards

Once you have done at least six days of practice (over a span of a week or more) and feel that you've gotten the essence of this "Week" through the videos and reading, you are ready to go to [Week 7](#). It's not necessary to read/view any of the Supplementary materials - these are totally optional.

Practice Log - Week 6

FORMAL PRACTICE: Practice at least six times this week, doing either a **Body Scan, Yoga** (either Yoga 1 or Yoga 2), or **Sitting Meditation** (guided or unguided). Also, do either the [Mountain Meditation](#) or the [Lake Meditation](#) at least once. As before, don't expect anything in particular. Just let your experience be your experience.

INFORMAL PRACTICE: Each day, at the end of the day before you go to bed, recall and record one communication experience on the [Communication Calendar](#). It doesn't need to be a particularly difficult communication, simply one in which you can recollect wanting something in particular to come out of the conversation (even if it was simply wanting a smile or a particular kind of response).

NOTE: For the first time, in this informal practice, we are expanding our mindfulness to include another person's world, and there is a space (4th column) to consider what **they** wanted out of the communication and what **they** actually got. To really do this, you'd have to, at least for the moment, put yourself in the other party's shoes. A complete exploration of this would, of course, include asking them about this, which would be critical in an important communication. There is a very powerful process that includes a methodology for really understanding another's feelings-wants-needs-perceptions, [Non-Violent Communication](#), which is well worth exploring, but is beyond the scope of this week's practice.

Date	Practice Comments (include whether yoga, body scan, or sitting)
7th day & beyond is optional	

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