



Say What You Mean:
A Mindful Approach to
Nonviolent Communication

Oren Jay Sofer



Why do we communicate?

- To get something done
- To meet needs
- To connect
- To create understanding

Communication is a flow of understanding.

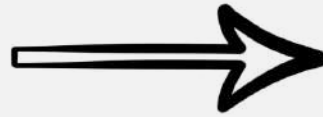
Mindful communication creates understanding through awareness.

Mindful Communication

All of the principles, practices, and tools serve one aim:
to create understanding.



A “high order” skill . . .



What conditions support dialogue?





*"What I want in my life is compassion,
a flow between myself and others based on
mutual giving from the heart."*

Mindful Communication

Foundations of training:

I. **Presence:** Lead with presence.

II. **Intention:**

III. **Attention:**



Mindfulness

Being aware of what's happening in the present moment in a balanced and nonreactive way.

Presence

Embodied awareness of our direct sensory, mental, and emotional experience.

What are the benefits of presence in conversation?



Presence

Practices:

- Grounding in Body
- Pausing
- Pace
- Relational Awareness



Presence

Reference Points:

- Mindfulness practice
 - Gravity
 - Center-line
 - Breathing
 - Touch-points
 - Hearing



Mindful Communication

Foundations of training:

- I. **Presence:** Lead with presence.
- II. **Intention:** Come from curiosity and care.
- III. **Attention:**



Intention

Intention is where we're coming from inside.

It's the motivation or inner quality of heart behind our words and actions, rather than focusing on a specific outcome.



Intention determines direction.

Intention is the single most powerful and transformative ingredient in dialogue.



Getting curious is a radical shift.



Intention



Principles:

- *How* we are talking about things is often as important as *what* we are talking about.
- Good will creates trust.
- The more we understand each other, the easier it is to find solutions that work.

Intention

To come from curiosity and care...

with an intention to understand . . . *means to listen.*

- Real dialogue requires listening
- Without listening no communication happens
- Listening builds trust & good will
- . . . builds understanding
- . . . opens creative options
- . . . can bring healing & resolution

“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.”

– Rachel Naomi Remen, MD

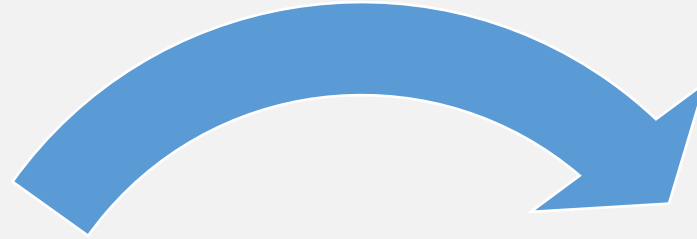


The greatest problem in communication



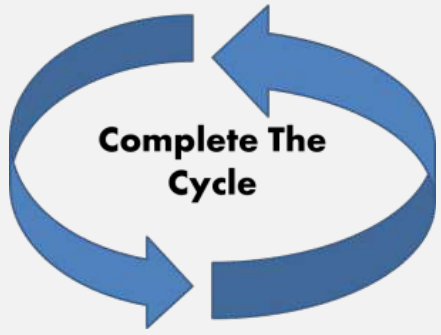
...is the illusion that it has taken place.

Complete the Cycle



msg sent = received ?



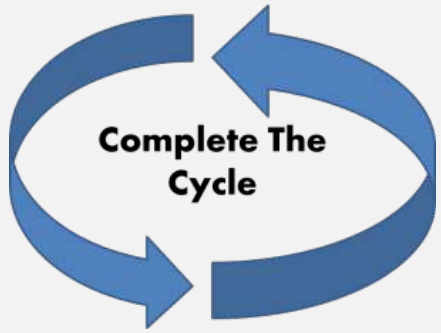


Listening and Reflecting

Reflection:

a restatement of or inquiry about what's been said to confirm understanding.





Listening and Reflecting

Reflect before you respond:

- Confirms message sent = received
- Builds mutual understanding
- Maintains connection ("Did the call drop?")
- Helps the other person feel heard
- Slows the conversation down



Three ways to listen

1. Silent, whole-hearted presence
2. Summarizing / paraphrasing
3. Empathic reflection

Aim:

- Did I hear right?
- How can I give this person an experience of feeling heard or understood?



Interactive Practice

- **Speaker:** leads with presence
 - Gravity, touch point, pause...
- **Listener:** listens with intention to understand
 - a) Listen silently with warmth and curiosity
 - b) Interject and summarize briefly
 - c) End: Take a guess about what matters most.
 - *"Is what matters to you here...?"*
 - *"Is what's most important to you something about...?"*

Mindful Communication

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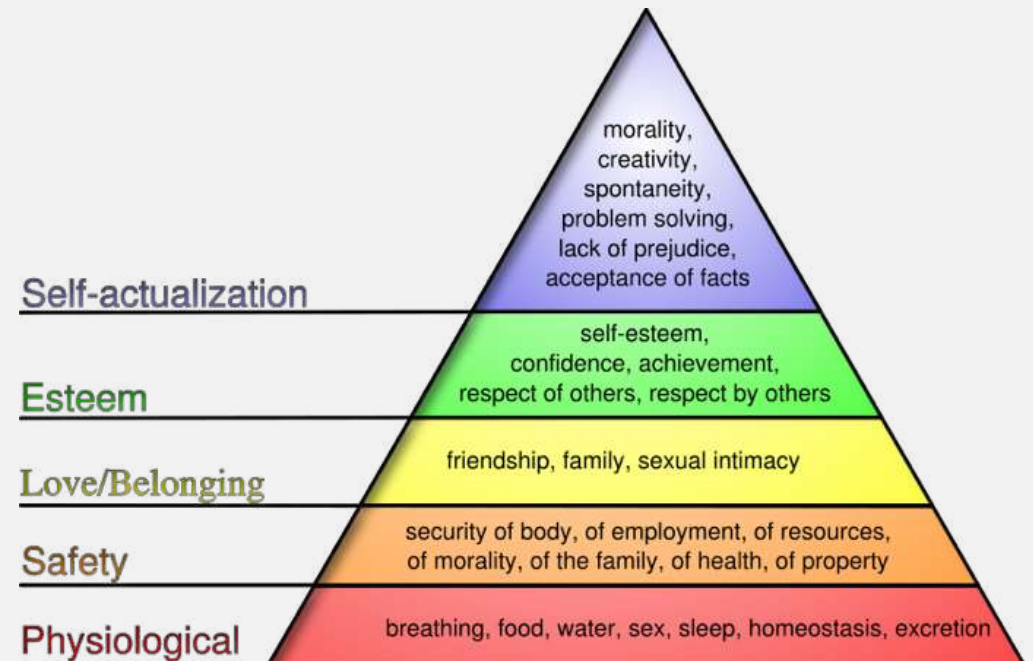
- I. **Presence:** Lead with presence.
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- III. **Attention:** Focus on what matters.



Attention: What matters?

Principle: Everything we do, we do to meet a need

- Universal, root human needs
- Differentiate from strategies
- See life through lens of longing
- Doorway to compassion



Strategy

What we want

- Person
- Location
- Action
- Time
- Object

Need

Why we want it

- Physiological needs
- Relational needs
- Spiritual needs

The Power of Identifying Needs

1. More choice and empowerment individually
2. Increased ability to hear and connect with others
3. Capacity to transform judgments and blame
4. Greater options for creativity and collaboration
5. Shared basis for peace

Attention: Focus on what matters

- Observations: What happened?
- **Feelings:** How do I feel about it?
- **Needs:** Why? What matters to me?
- **Requests:** Where do we go from here?

Say What You Mean

- To say what you mean...
- What do I want to say?
 - What's really true? Investigate using NVC template
- What do I want the other person to know or understand?
- How can I say it in a way that they will be able to hear?

Say What You Mean

Principle: The less blame and criticism in our words, the easier it is for others to hear us.

Principle: You have more clarity and power when you use fewer words with more sincerity.



Say What You Mean

Authenticity

- What is true for you?
- What would you like them to know or understand?

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Care

- Connect with the care in your heart
- Recollect intention: where do you want to come from?

How can you say this in a way that they will be able to hear?

Questions and Discussion...



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