

Thank you for your presence.

Sharing:

We shared instances of both skilled and unskilled speech. It struck me how powerful loving and right speech can be. And how it's a gift we all have to give to the world's healing, how uplifting it is to receive it.

Likewise, how painful and disturbing unskilled speech is, how much of our life energy is spent trying to rectify and deal with speech that does not meet the guidelines.

Our speech is a small rudder that steers the large ship of our lives. Finding right speech in the midst of pain and conflict, refraining from unskilled speech can feel complicated and we're not sure what to do.

Here it's not so much about not making a mistake as noticing and staying present. Our work is from the skin in. We cannot do the work of others.

Sometimes it is knowing that pain and wounding may continue to be present and holding that. Wisdom and right response arise, and yet still things may be unresolved. Our work is holding with difficult feelings in the interim with trust.

We're not trying to be perfect, or to judge ourselves as to whether we can 'solve' anything. Many situations cannot be solved as much as navigated with presence.

Often situations soften when we give up trying to fix them and simply stay present with compassion for everyone's pain.

As Julian of Norwich once said, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Healing is not so much about changing outside circumstances as being present with what unfolds and finding the wholeness inside that responds.

Practice: when we are caught by pain and discomfort

I noticed in my own practice that every time my mind began talking, it was resisting, distracting from some kind of discomfort the second before. When there is no resistance, the mind is quiet. When the inner voice becomes active, there is generally a discomfort underneath it.

Sometimes it is just a momentary disquiet and we find ourselves back in the moment. We return to the observer choicelessly noticing objects arising.

And sometimes, we find we are more deeply caught: in a repeating, revolving story. We find the same conversation, argument, justification or just a memory keeps going over and over like a broken record.

In these cases, we explore the discomfort, looking below the mind's activity to find the source. The mind's activity is a way to keep us apart from, averted from the painful arising.

Aversion means we hold ourselves at distance from the painful belief or emotion. We do not want to touch it. The pain thus cannot be integrated and digested.

The practice is the opposite: to bring it very close. Our basic tool is holding and polishing, which we reviewed together in class. Holding and polishing as a way to hold things close, to listen carefully with full presence.

It's purpose is to cultivate the ability to be present with discomfort and fear in a non conceptual way. With direct presence, the underlying factors that trigger the discomfort (beliefs that no longer serve us, undigested life pain) can come into the light and be seen.

An important note that was brought up is that directed practice is for insistent visitors in practice and in life, where something keeps repeating in our attention and will not go away. The directed practice then helps bring to light the underlying emotion, belief or conflict that needs to be seen and attended to.

Otherwise, we sit watching the flow of things arise and pass in an open and bonding way.

SKILLFUL SPEECH

This is our last week we will be looking at skillful communication. We've looked at two yardsticks: skillful listening, and the 5 factors that were in the cards you received last week.

Let's add three more structures, or yardsticks, that you can use to find skillful communication:

1) NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The most commonly and casually cited study on the relative importance of verbal and nonverbal messages in personal communication is one by Prof.

Albert Mehrabian of the University of California in Los Angeles. In the 1970s, his studies suggested that we overwhelmingly deduce our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about what someone says not by the actual words spoken, but by the speaker's body language and tone of voice.

His 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication says that 7% of communication is based on what's said. 38% is based on style and tone of speech and 55% on body language. His studies suggest that nonverbal cues are more important to understanding and believing communication than the words themselves.

Clearly non-verbal communication is a large part of right speech. Let's look at the non verbal communication as part of how we interact with others and with ourselves. Skillful communication means being aware of what we are saying with our body language.

We made a list in class of some of the ways we communicate outside of the actual words we use:

- crossing arms
- eye contact (or lack of)
- grimacing
- leaning in or out
- face glazes over
- tone of voice
- how fast or loud we talk
- gestures
- nodding
- smiling
- tapping feet
- ignoring someone in a conversation
- taking up too much space in a conversation
- slamming doors
- dominance patterns in controlling a conversation
- physical proximity
- being distracted by ones phone
- leaving appropriate gaps after someone has spoken
- physical size

Note that nonverbal cues follow the same five right speech guidelines as spoken words: true, timely, kind, gentle, beneficial.

Nonverbal communication can do one of three things:

REINFORCE: a gesture can underline or be a visual aid complementing what has been said. We might nod or smile to show our agreement or understanding.

CONTRADICT: We might verbally say we are listening while texting or doing a chore or looking at our watch. Here our nonverbal communication is contrary to our verbal words. We might cross our arms and turn away to show our disagreement with someone. We might say we are feeling one way while our body language says we are feeling something different.

STAND ALONE COMMUNICATION: Nonverbal communication can take the place of words. We might silently offer a look, a change in position, or a hug to someone to communicate a response.

2) ENERGY SIGNATURE PATTERNS OF SKILLFUL AND UNSKILLFUL SPEECH

A shortcut to knowing when speech is skilled or not is the energetic reaction we feel in the body.

Skilled speech opens the heart. When the heart is open, energy pours into us. It feels clean, leaves no residue.

Unskilled speech tends to shut us down, disconnecting. When the heart is closed, energy is blocked and it feels draining. It feels sticky, it tends to stick and repeat in the mind.

3) Final guideline, or reminder, and I have found to be most helpful:

If it's not true and not kind, don't say it.

If it's true but not kind, don't say it.

If it's kind but not true, don't say it.

If it's kind and true, find the right time to say it.

We broke into small groups for casual conversations, noticing the nonverbal ways we interacted with each other. Nonverbal cues I noticed included seeing people lean into their circle, keeping their faces and eye contact connected with each other. There was laughter to show understanding and connection, nodding of heads.

It felt uplifting, and we shared a feeling of energy enhancement and enjoyment: the hallmark of right speech. It felt good. Even being the

facilitator who was simply watching the groups' nonverbal language, and not hearing the actual words spoken was a joy.

HOMEWORK

Find the guidelines, or yardsticks, that seem the most helpful to you:

1. Skillful listening:
2. Five factors:
 - TRUE?
 - RIGHT TIME?
 - GENTLE?
 - FOR GOOD?
 - WITH LOVING INTENTION?
3. Energy pattern indicators:
 - ENERGY
 - STICKINESS
4. Non-verbal cues
5. Reminder ; true and kind, find the right time.

Make them a part of your life.