



Mindful Speaking

Communication

 Exercise

 20-30 min

 Group

 No

Have you ever had the experience of saying something that you later regretted, posting something on the Internet without thinking about the consequences, or responding to someone who asked how you are with “good” when, in fact, you were not feeling particularly good? These are examples of mindless speech, where we are not aware of or in control of what we are communicating to others. We are speaking out of habit and automatic pilot rather than appreciating our present moment circumstances and responding with purpose and truth. Unmindful speech is the opposite of mindful speech, which is essentially thinking before you speak.

Mindful speech is defined as the process of “speaking our truth, as best we can in any given moment, and simultaneously being aware of what we are saying and what it is like to say it” (Hassed & Chambers, 2014, p. 108). The mindful speech begins by bringing presence to our interactions with others. Just as when we practice mindfulness formally, such as a breath practice or body scan, in mindful speech, we are stepping out of automatic pilot mode and becoming aware of the wandering mind - the “automatic pilot of our interactions” (Hassed & Chambers, 2014). Here we can notice judging, daydreaming, drifting off, mentally rehearsing what to say next, or the urge to fill silences. We notice just how difficult it is to simply be present and pay attention to the conversation at hand.



Author

This tool was created by Lucinda Poole (Ph.D.).



Goal

The goal of the exercise is to improve individuals’ communication skills through practicing mindful, purposeful speaking.



Advice

- Use your judgment to set the time limit for the exercise. If your participants know each other reasonably well, you might like to increase the limit from three to five minutes to give participants a greater opportunity for practice.
- This exercise may be used in conjunction with the *Mindless versus Mindful Listening* exercise, also found in the Toolkit. Together, these tools will provide participants with a comprehensive foundation of how to communicate mindfully with others.



References

- Hassed, C., & Chambers, R. (2014). *Mindful learning: Reduce stress and improve brain performance for effective learning (Vol. 3)*. Exisle Publishing.



Mindful Speaking

Instructions

Step 1: Inform group about the upcoming exercise

Today we are going to pair up and have a few brief conversations with our partner to practice mindful speech. Mindful speech is essentially thinking before speaking from the heart with intention. It is a reflective process that can be broken down into three elements, or steps:

1. Slow down and connect to the present moment. Become aware of where you are and who you are with and take a breath, a deliberate pause, before speaking.
2. Check-in with what you are about to say, and why you have chosen to say this out of everything you could say at this moment. What is your motivation for your chosen words? What is your gut feeling saying to you?
3. After you have spoken, pause again and check-in with yourself. What did it feel like to say that? Did it come out as you intended? How did the other person receive what you said and what was his or her response?

Step 2: Divide group into pairs

Have the group split into pairs and ask each pair to decide who will be the speaker and who will be the listener.

Step 3: Choose a topic of conversation

Invite the speakers to choose a topic of conversation - something they feel comfortable talking about for a few minutes. This could be anything - their pet, job, weekend plans, favorite movie, favorite food, and so on.

Step 4: Start talking

Set a timer for 3 minutes and instruct speakers to start talking and listeners to start listening. Remind speakers to talk slowly and from the heart, to check in with what they are about to say and why, and to notice how the listener receives what they say.



Step 5: Stop and reflect

After 3 minutes, stop the exercise and invite speakers to reflect on the following:

- How did it feel to speak mindfully compared to how you normally speak?
- Did what you say come out as intended?
- How did the other person respond?
- How do you feel now?

Step 6: Swap roles

Have pairs switch roles and return to Step 4. The listeners are now the speakers, and the speakers are now the listeners.

Optional extra step: Take-home message

At the end of the exercise, invite participants to write down the three elements of mindful speech, as outlined in Step 1. Perhaps give the participants small note cards for this so that they can keep their notes in their wallet and be reminded to implement mindful speech in everyday life.