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Make the most of it

MBSR Week 7

Mindful Communication



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Being present in the communication with others

Communicating with others can offer one of the greatest opportunities to practice mindfulness. Our daily communication with family, friends and work colleagues is filled with abundant possibilities to stay present to how we feel and act . moment to moment. Practicing mindful communication necessitates that we slow down and allow ourselves to really look at the choices we make with others.

But most important, mindful communication requires us to reshape our field of awareness in every interaction. It asks . what can I bring to this communication, rather than what can I get from it. What qualities . kindness, acceptance, patience, lightness, humour, strength . can I offer? When we communicate mindfully, every interaction is fresh . filled with the opportunity and open to discovery.

Home practice – week 7

1. Experiment with practicing the Body Scan, Yoga and Sitting Meditation without the audio guidance
2. Be aware of the ways you communicate in your personal and professional interactions.
3. Read the additional documents.

My best wishes for week 7!



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Homework Record Form – week 7

Record on the Homework Record Form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the homework, so that we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Day/Date	Comments
Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	
Day 6	
Day 7	



A Comparison of Passive, Assertive and Aggressive Behaviours:

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Verbal Behaviors		
You avoid saying what you want, think or feel. If you do, you say them in such a way that you put yourself down. Apologetic words with hidden meanings are frequent. A smoke screen of vague words or silence. %now+%%ellō +, %meanō +, %guess+, and %an sorry+. You allow others to choose for you.	You say what you honestly want, think and feel in direct and helpful ways. You make your own choices. You communicate with tact and humor. You use %t statements. Your words are clear and well chosen.	You say what you want, think and feel, but at the expense of others. You use %loaded words+and %ou+statements that label and blame. You are full of threats or accusations and apply one-upmanship.
Non-Verbal Behaviors		
You use actions instead of words. You hope someone will guess what you want. You look as if you don't mean what you say. Your voice is weak, hesitant and soft. You whisper in a monotone. Your eyes are to the side or downcast. You nod your head to almost anything anyone says. You sit or stand as far away as you can from the other person. You don't know what to do with your hands and they are trembling or clammy. You look uncomfortable, shuffle and are tense or inhibited.	You listen closely. Your manner is calm and assured. You communicate caring and strength. Your voice is firm, warm and expressive. You look directly at the other person, but you don't stare. You face the person. Your hands are relaxed. You hold your head erect and you lean toward the other person. You have a relaxed expression.	You present yourself as very determined. Your voice is loud and challenging. You look around with a cool, fixed look. You fix your opponent with your eyes. You threaten the other person. Your hands are rolled into fists or you are making threatening gestures with them.
Your Apparent Goals		
You please, to be liked.	You communicate, to be respected	You dominate or humiliate.
Your Apparent Feelings		
You feel anxious, ignored, hurt, manipulated and disappointed with yourself. You are often angry and resentful later.	You feel confident and successful. You feel good about yourself at that time and later. You feel in control, you have self-respect and you are goal oriented.	You feel self righteous, controlling and superior. Sometimes you feel embarrassed or selfish later.



Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Your Apparent Payoffs		
You avoid unpleasant situations, conflicts, short-term tensions and confrontations. You don't have to take responsibility for your choices.	You feel good. You feel respected by others. Your self-confidence improves. You make your own choices. Your relationships with others are improved. You have very little physical distress now or later. You are in touch with your feelings.	You get some anger off your chest. You get a feeling of control. You feel superior.
The Effects On Other's Feelings		
They feel guilty, superior, frustrated or even angry.	They feel respected or valued. They feel free to express themselves.	They feel humiliated, depreciated or hurt.
Their feeling towards you		
They feel irritated. They pity and depreciate you. They feel frustrated and disgusted with you. They lose respect for you because you are a pushover and someone who does not know where he stands.	They usually respect, trust and value you. They know where you stand.	They feel hurt, defensive, humiliated or angry. They resent, distrust and fear you. They may want revenge.
Probable Outcomes Of Each Type Of Behavior		
You don't get what you want. If you do get your own way, it is indirect. You feel emotionally dishonest. Others achieve their goals at your expense. Your rights are violated. Your anger builds up and you either push it down or redirect it toward other people who are less powerful. You may find yourself procrastinating, suffering in silence, doing things half-heartedly, being sloppy, or becoming forgetful. You get maneuvered. Loneliness and isolation may become part of your life.	You often get what you want if it is reasonable. You often achieve your goals. You gain self-respect. You feel good. You convert win-lose to win-win. The outcome is determined by above-board negotiations. Your rights and other's rights are respected.	You often get what you want, but at the expense of others. You hurt others by making choices for them and infantilizing them. Others feel a right to get even. You may have increasing difficulty with relaxing and unwinding later.

Source: *The Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program Workbook*,
Center for Mindfulness, Worcester, USA



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How to listen, how to speak Mindful Communication

"First learn the meaning of what you say, and then speak." -- Epictetus

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While it may be easy to communicate with kindness and respect to those we care about, how far does that regard extend to those who try our patience? How considerate are we with people we'll never meet again? How gracious are we when pressures mount? How mindful do we believe we should be with people we don't like?

Mindful Listening	Mindful Speaking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focused attention on the speaker• Taking in whatever is being said, without judgment or interpretation• Noticing thoughts or urges to interrupt• Letting go and returning your attention to speaker• Noticing patterns of automatic reactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focused attention in this moment• Awareness of body, feelings and state of mind• Authenticity: say what is true for you• Noticing how others' responses affect your words• Noticing patterns of small talk or autopilot.

"Before you speak ask yourself if what you are going to say is true, is kind, is necessary, is helpful. If the answer is no, maybe what you are about to say should be left unsaid." Bernard Meltzer

Can we learn to accept the little wounds, understanding that we need each other for survival?

Porcupine Fable:

It had been the coldest winter ever. The people had withdrawn from the bitter landscape. The birds fell from the sky, their wings frozen by the relentless icy winds. Trees and fields stood hard and barren. Many animals died because of the cold.

Word spread through the animal kingdom that death was closing in on the planet. The porcupines, realizing the seriousness of the situation, decided to group together to keep warm and survive. As they snuggled in close, covering and protecting themselves, they felt the quills of their closest companion wound and pierce their own flesh.

After awhile, the stabs from the sharp spears of their porcupine pals became so agonizing that they decided they must distance themselves from each other. As a consequence of their separation, they began to die; alone and frozen. They realized they had to make a choice- either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the Earth.



Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. They gingerly nestled toward one another; once again creating the warmth so necessary for their survival. As their brothers' quills began to pierce and poke into their own flesh, they took a deep breath and relaxed into the knowing that the small pains were simply an inconvenient necessity.

They learned to live with the little wounds caused by the close relationship with their companions in order to receive the life-affirming heat that came from the others. After all, their very survival depended on it.



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Mindfulness in the Workplace: Ways to reduce stress during the workday

The following ways are simply a road map. I wish you peace and well-being as you explore the territory and discover your ways!

1. Take 5-30 minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate- sit or lie down and be with yourself, gaze out of the window, listen to the sounds of nature or take a slow, quiet walk.
2. While your car is warming up (if you have a car) - try taking a minute to quietly pay attention to your breathing.
3. Decide to not listen to music on your way to work and be with yourself.
4. Take a moment to orient yourself to your workday once you park your car at the work place. Use the walk across the parking lot / tram / train stop to step into your life. To know where you are and where you are going.
5. While sitting at your desk, keyboard etc., pay attention to bodily sensations, consciously attempting to relax and get rid of excess tension.
6. Use your breaks to truly relax rather than simply pausing. For instance instead of having coffee, a cigarette or reading, try taking a short walk-or sitting at your desk and renewing yourself.
7. At lunch, changing your environment can be helpful.
8. Try closing your door (if appropriate) and take some time to consciously relax. If it's not possible, try to find a quiet spot where you can sit at least 2-3 minutes in silence and relax. Connect with your breath.
9. Decide to stop for 1-3 minutes every hour during the workday. Become aware of your breathing and bodily sensations, allowing the mind to settle in as a time to regroup and recoup.
10. Use the everyday cues in your environment as reminders to center yourself, e.g. the telephone ringing, sitting at the computer etc.
11. Take some time at lunch or other moments in the day to speak with close associates. Try choosing topics that are not necessarily work related.
12. Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use this as a time to eat slowly and be with yourself.
13. At the end of the workday, try retracing the day acknowledging and congratulating yourself for what you've accomplished and then make a list for tomorrow. You've done enough for today!
14. Pay attention to the short walk to your car / tram/ train-breathing the crisp or warm air. Feel the cold or warmth of your body. What might happen if you opened to and accepted these environmental conditions and bodily sensations rather than resist them? Listen to the sounds outside your workplace. Can you walk without feeling rushed? What happens when you slow down?
15. At the end of the workday, while your car is warming-up / wait for public transport, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home-take a moment to simply be-enjoy it for a moment. Like most of us, you're heading into your next full-time job-home!



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16. While driving / walking, notice if you are rushing. What does this feel like? What could you do about it? Remember, you've got more control than you might imagine.

17. Before entering your home, take a breath and center yourself. You can even try to tell to yourself: I have arrived! I am home now!

18. Try changing out of work clothes when you get home. This simple act might help you to make a smoother transition into your next role+much of the time you can probably spare+5minutes to do this. Say hello to each of your family members or to the people you live with. Take a moment to look in their eyes. If possible, make the time to take 5-10 minutes to be quiet and still. If you live alone, feel what it is like to enter the quietness of your home, the feeling of entering your own safe environment.

Source: Saki Santorelli - Stress Reduction and Relaxation Handbook, Center for Mindfulness