

4 Keys to Conscious Communication

Even though we communicate all the time, for most of us, we have never received any training or education on how to communicate. We fumble our way through many messy conversations and relationships without the skills gleaned from being a student of conscious communication.

Being a student begins with knowing that we communicate not only with our words, but also with our movement and energy. A slight shift in our body language can convey a new message. And our energy, how we are *being*, can create subtle ripples of influence that are intuitively received by others, and that impact the tone of our words.

We become conscious communicators when we are aware of our words, body language and energy in every interaction. Aware means being *present* to, and *curious* about, how we express ourselves, and the impact we are having both on individuals and the whole (energetic space). We take greater responsibility in our relationships by *owning* our part in any conflict, and celebrating new milestones of joy and success.

Connection ~ The Heart of Conscious Communication

To practice conscious communication, our words, movements and energy must be in service of nurturing *connection*. Connection is the passageway between individuals through which the various forms of self-expression travel. The wider the passage is, the easier, more fluid and fulfilling the discourse. The more the passage constricts, the harder it is to reach the other person (they tune out or defend). Being a conscious communicator means being *deliberate* and *intentional* in how we express ourselves so that we nurture our connection and the lines of communication.

Here are four ways you can nurture and sustain your connection with others.

"May your heart be like a lake...with a calm still surface and great depths of kindness." ~ Lao Tzu

1. Speak Calmly: When we raise our voice or react to what others are saying we initiate conflict. So much of conflict can be averted simply by staying calm. It is the safety created by our calmness that keeps the space of connection open. Taking deep breaths is a great way to stay grounded in your body and maintain a calm tone. Identifying the underlying need or deeper value trying to be expressed by the other will also help you to stay calm. In other words, look for the positive and see through the eyes of empathy.

2. Speak Slowly: Speaking fast is often a sign of being ungrounded, nervous and, as a whole, disconnected. When someone speaks fast it often feels like they are talking right through us. By pacing ourselves we create room between our words so that each is more easily received. It's in the space between that we not only hear the other's words, but connect to the human being behind the words.

3. Use Brevity: Speaking has more impact when it is short and to the point. The longer our sentences are, and the more we speak at one particular time, the less engaged the other will be. They will begin to drift away. Be conscious of your balance of dialogue – meaning, be aware that you are listening as much as you are speaking. When this balance gets tilted too much to one side, you will lose your connection and desired impact.

4. Pause: Conscious communication is not just about the art of sharing, but the art of receiving as well. It is very tempting to want to continuously fill in space, especially when there is a pause after you finish speaking. Let this pause settle in. Allow others a moment to digest what you have said and compose their thoughts. By speaking calmly, slowly and with brevity you will find it much easier to hold the empty space that lies between your words and theirs.

Getting Started

While these four keys are simple, they may not be easy to practice at first. We have a lifetime of habitual patterns to overcome. To make things easier, the next time you are about to enter a conversation choose *one* key to practice. Take a moment to imagine what it would look like for you to play with this key in your discourse. Another thing that may help is to share this article with the important people in your life. Each person can talk about what keys they'd like to play with more, what it would look like to incorporate them in the communication, and how the keys can serve the relationship.

Know that it will take time and patience, but soon you will find that these simple keys have a powerful influence in shifting the dynamics of your relationship towards greater positivity and success.

Enjoy!

Vince Gowman - Remembering To Play

15 Ways to Say No
When we learn to say No to others,
we learn to say Yes to our Self.

"There is a difference between being self-centred, and centred in the Self." ~ Lynda Austin

For many, saying No is a challenging task. We have been brought up to believe that putting ourselves first is bad, selfish or wrong. Yet when the oxygen mask drops on the airplane, who do you put it on first, you or your child? Making one self a priority is essential to healthy, happy and productive living. To do this, we may have to say No to certain people who could redirect us from listening to our own needs and practicing self-care.

15 simple ways to say No:

That won't work for me.
That doesn't resonate/feel right.
I feel I need to take time for me right now.
My body really wants/needs to dance tonight.
I would rather be in nature on my own.
An early night is the better option for me.
I don't feel like it.
I'm not able to.
I can't do it.
My heart wouldn't be in it.
I don't have time right now.
My focus needs to be on self-care instead.
My priority is my creativity at the moment.
I won't be able to fit it in today.
I'd prefer not, that's just not my kinda thing!

Applying the Spirit of Yes And:

To soften your communication, add a form of acknowledgment or appreciation before saying No:

Thanks for your invitation, and...
That sounds like fun, and...
I can see how much you want me to join you, and...
I get how hard you are working on this, and...
I appreciate you thinking of me, and...

Tip: Use as much **first person language** as you can. Using words like *I, Me, My,* and *Mine* not only help you access your own truth, but ensure you are not making it about the other person. When we use words like *You* or *Your* we are more likely to cause others to be defensive.

Communication is an art form. It requires practice and your willingness to honor your true feelings and be authentic with others. Both you and the other person deserve this!

"Just because you can, doesn't mean you have to." ~ [Lynda Austin](#)

15 Ways to Express Needs & Desires

"There is a difference between being self-centred, and centred in the Self."

~ [Lynda Austin](#)

We have been trained not to ask for what we want. We will bend ourselves backwards, deny our feelings, and burn ourselves out all to avoid stating our needs. Just like in [15 Ways to Say No](#), we are held back by social conditioning that says *putting oneself first is selfish or wrong*. Or *always give to others first...*and yet we cannot give away what we don't have. In other words, we must learn to give to our Self first, fill our own cup so to speak, before we can feed others.

"Everything we want is on the other side of fear." ~ *Farrah Gray*

Our social conditioning is based in fear. The four most common ones I see are:

- **Fear of rejection** - *If I ask for what I want I'll get turned down, shunned...again!*
- **Fear of success** - *If I ask for what I want, and I actually get it...will I be able to handle it?*
- **Fear of loss** - *If I ask for what I want and get it, what might I have to leave behind?*
- **Fear of the unknown** - *If I ask for what I want and get it, then what? Where will I be? What else may open up?*

Asking for what we want can feel vulnerable. We are creatures of habit, and we like to stay within what's comfortable and familiar. When we ask for what we want we step out of the shadows to declare ourselves and open to the possibility of the new and unknown.

15 simple ways to express your needs and desires:

*What works for me is to go slow right now.
I'd love to do something different, like go for a hike.
I'd like to go camping this weekend.
Can you repeat that?
What I need is a bit more space, and what that looks like is...
What resonates for me is spending time indoors.
My body needs movement.
My sense is I'm going to need more time than I originally said I would.
I want to go swimming today.
I would like to share my poem with you.
My heart is telling me to go there instead.
My intuition is telling me to leave.
I need to leave early.
Will you join me?
Let's go for an adventure!*

Expressing your feelings before asking for what you want helps you to connect to yourself and the other person, as well as communicate the importance of your request.

For instance:

- *I am feeling tired. I need to leave early.*
- *I am feeling energized! Let's go for an adventure!*
- *I'm feeling uncomfortable about that choice. My heart is telling me to go there instead.*

Feeling words: Examples of feeling words you may find useful are ~ *uncomfortable, overwhelmed, unclear, stressed, uncertain, tired, confused*. These words have less of an edge than words like *frustrated, angry, disrespected*, and *annoyed*, and are less likely to cause the other person to feel defensive.

Extra Tips

Tip #1: Just like in [15 Ways to Say No](#), use as much **first person language** as you can. Using words like *I*, *Me*, *My*, and *Mine* help you access and express your truth.

Tip #2: Ask for what you want more of instead of less of. If you catch yourself saying, *I want you to stop being so messy*, change it to, *I need more organization in our house*. By doing this we express our needs/values and educate the other person on who we are and what is important to us. We are also better able to connect with the other person, and limit feelings of judgment and defensiveness.

Tip #3: Be calm ~ be aware of your energy while you are speaking. Tone is what creates the majority of the impact in conversation. So stay centred, take a deep breath if needed, and fill your words with calm, grounded energy.

Expressing your needs and desires is essential for living a balanced and fulfilled life. Take time to check in with yourself regularly. If you feel stressed or out of balance, chances are there is a need not being met that wants to be honoured.

Sharing versus Telling

Communication for Staying Centered in the Self

It is natural for us to tell people what to do. It is part of the human condition to believe we know what is best for others. This may be true when we are with young children and, for example, we see a child approaching a moving car. In that moment it is probably wise to tell the child to stand back. But as children grow older, we know less and less what is best for them. We can assume, but chances are our ideas for others are simply that - our own ideas, not theirs.

We can only speak on behalf ourselves, not on behalf of others. When we speak on behalf of ourselves we share instead of tell. We share from our own experience and give people the opportunity to take what they wish from what is being offered. When you share some of your potato chips you simply offer the bag to another person and let them choose how to respond. You don't put it in their face or dump the bag

on their head. You gently offer some of what you have with lots of room for them to respond how they wish. Sharing your self is no different.

Sharing uses language that is rooted in:

- The Self - "I" "Me" "My"
- Personal experience
- Freedom of choice
- Non-attachment to thoughts, ideas and perspectives
- The present moment

You share your Self

Telling often uses language that is focused on:

- The other - "You" "Your"
- Assumptions
- Shame
- Judgment
- Attachment to thoughts, ideas and perspectives
- Past and future.

You tell others

Here are some examples of telling and sharing. While reading, feel the energetic difference between them:

Telling

- Why don't you...
- You should...
- You shouldn't...
- You have to...
- Don't you think that...
- You got to...
- You seem to always...
- You keep...
- Why do you always...

Sharing

- What works for me is...
- My experience is...
- I personally wouldn't...
- I would...
- What comes up for me is...
- I'm wondering if this would work for you...
- I'm feeling that...
- I suggest...
- My concern is...
- I'm noticing...
- What feels like truth to me is...
- My sense is...

By speaking on behalf of our Self and using "I" "Me" and "My" language we experience the following benefits:

- We stay grounded and centred more in our Self
- We express our thoughts and feelings more often and easily
- We focus on what we can control - our personal experience, versus their personal experience
- We give clearer instructions
- We find it easier to say No
- We educate people more about ourselves including our boundaries, personal desires and values
- People receive and therefore know us better
- We know ourselves better

What helps is starting with the assumption that people are naturally creative, resourceful and whole. They are capable of finding their own answers and making their own choices. Trusting this, we no longer have to impose others with our perspectives, but rather simply share them, knowing they will take what they want to take and leave the rest behind.

In truth, this is all we can do anyway. Whether we share or tell we are always speaking from our own experience, so we might as well use language that reflects it. In doing so, we create greater safety, connection and openness in our relationships.