



Mindful Communication

Take these mindful steps to better your chances of getting your point across in difficult conversations:

1. **Mindful breathing.** Before having your important conversation, take a few deep diaphragmatic breaths. For instructions on mindful breathing, go to mindfulhub.com and search “seven steps to mindful breathing.”
2. **Body awareness/centering.** Scan your body for tension. Are there areas in your body that feel painful and tense? It is common to feel constriction in the stomach or the throat before having an important conversation. Breathe into these areas to release tension.
3. **What is the purpose of the conversation?** Prepare for your conversation by thinking about, or writing down the purpose of the conversation. Is it to clear up a misunderstanding, make an apology, or make a request? Being clear about your purpose will help you get what you need from the conversation.
4. **What is my side of the story?** Think about your side of the story, and what the story means to you. **What does this situation say about you?** When expressing your story, start your sentences with “I” statements, such as, “I feel bad about the way our evening ended last night.”
5. What feelings does the situation invoke? **Contrary to popular belief, being in touch with your feelings will not make your communication weak.** In fact knowing what “buttons” are pushed in the situation will help you stay in control of your emotions as opposed to being swept up by them.
6. **What is their side of the story?** Think about the other person’s side of the story. Having a sense of the other person’s point of view might help you find a good place to start the conversation.
7. **What might they be feeling?** What emotions might the situation be eliciting in the other person? Can you feel compassion for their point of view?
8. **Is there common ground?** Is there a “third” story? One that combines a solution that meets everyone’s needs?
9. **View the situation with beginners mind.** Even if this is a conversation you have had many times, there may be new information. Use the mindfulness attitude of beginners mind when listening to the other side of the story.
10. **After going through these steps, do you still want to have this conversation?** Postponing the conversation is sometimes the best option. If you decide on this option, you might want to try clearing your head with some mindfulness meditation, then going back to the problem. Oftentimes insight and answers to problems are found in moments of mindfulness.

If you decide to go through with the conversation, take some time to be mindful of what you learned from the situation. Assertive communication honors all parties involved and takes patience and courage. It also takes practice. Remember that communication is an ongoing process and situations often involve more than one conversation. ***We wish you twenty minutes of mindfulness each day!***