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Promoting Good Communication Skills  
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When we are in a conversation, do we have preconceived notions in our mind? Are we injecting our own intentions and assumptions? Are we creating an idea in our mind thinking that we know what the person feels or that we think we know what they really mean? Are we adding in extra emotions and feelings and reacting to that? Are we reacting to things we made up in our mind?

Have you ever had the experience before talking to someone where you create the whole conversation in your mind and by the time you actually have the conversation you're reacting to the made up thoughts that never even happened? In essence you pump up your own emotions, and the other person ends up being on the receiving end of a conversation that they weren't even a part of!

When you are in a conversation, where are you? Just as you can be lost in thought while walking or driving, you can be lost in thought during a conversation. You can be disconnected and disengaged from the other person. Or in a conversation are you thinking about your own agenda and what you want to say? Did you already formulate a response without really listening to what the other person is saying?

### **Mindful Communication**

- Clear your head before beginning a conversation
- Mindful listening - waiting for the other person to finish speaking
- Non-judgmental listening - no right or wrong, just different perceptions
- I understand, I see what you mean. Respect the other's experience
- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes
- Be totally there
- Let go of results and expectations. Do not have a fixed result in mind.
- Don't harm. Words have energy
- Don't make assumptions, ask for clarification
- Stay curious. Check in with your body and mind.
- Care. We don't pay attention to things we don't care about and we don't care about things we don't pay attention to. How can we be present to care about the other person in the conversation? Without presence we are checked out. When we approach a dialogue with curiosity and care, we're willing and able to listen. And that opens the door to more connection and understanding. It takes practice!

**Presence.** Showing up as fully and completely as possible.

**Intention.** Are our words and actions in sync? Are the words and our body language saying the same thing? Are we intentionally staying present, curious and caring or are we on automatic, relying on unconscious habitual patterns?

**Attention.** Being aware of our emotions, feelings and needs supports our ability to choose consciously how we participate in a conversation. The more awareness we have, the more choice we have in how to proceed. Are we really listening or are we formulating the perfect response in our minds before the other person even finishes speaking?

**The all important pause.** Meditation creates behavioral change on a physiological level, encouraging more rational behavior while weakening others that drive fear and irrational emotional responses. Meditation makes it easier to 'let go' of negative responses and decrease reactivity. You will become more aware if you are having a knee jerk reaction to something being said or you are responding genuinely.

## **Meditation**

How do you talk to yourself?

In the thousands of thoughts that we have everyday, what do you 'tell' yourself? Are you negative, positive, loving, admonishing, patient, impatient?

Do you have recurring dialogue set on a loop that you play over again and again and again?

Monkey mind.

Creating the micro pause. Will never stop your thoughts. Thoughts can be good, productive, creative! Not the purpose of meditation. It's all about where you place your attention, creating space and awareness.

If we abstain from negative speech patterns in our thoughts and create kinder, more loving and patient speech, that will be reflected in our inner dialogue and when our inner dialogue is nourishing, what we say and do is an extension of that.