



Amrita School of Spiritual & Cultural Studies



The Role of Meditation in Improving Interpersonal Communication and Relationship Quality

Dr. Shobhana Madhavan
Associate Professor
Amrita School of Business
Coimbatore

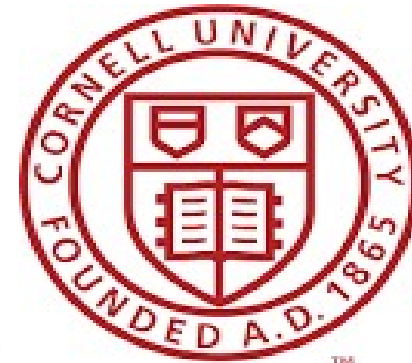


Professional Background

- BE (Delhi College of Engineering, Delhi University)
- PGDM (MBA), IIM Ahmedabad
- MPS International Development (Cornell University, New York)
- PhD Deakin University, Australia

Worked in rural development and forest conservation projects in India, Madagascar, Vietnam, and Cambodia

Faculty at Amrita School of Business, Coimbatore, since 2004



Outline of Presentation and Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome:

By the end of this session, students will be able to understand the positive role of meditation on
(a) Interpersonal communication
(b) Relationship quality

- Why is Good Communication Important?
- The Importance of Relationships
- Barriers to Effective Communication
- How Meditation can Help Overcome Barriers to Communication
- Research on Meditation and Communication in Varied Relationship Contexts
- Tips to Increase Mindfulness in Communication

Why is Good Communication Important?

- Helps in Creating Harmonious Relationships
- Communication is the Foundation of the Workplace
- *Will help you get a good job 😊*

- Dictionary Definitions

- ***Communicate (English):***

- ***The process of giving information or of making emotions or ideas known to someone ;***

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/communicate>

- ***Communicare (Latin)***

- ***To share; to make common; To impart***

<https://www.wordsense.eu/communicare/>

Human Beings Require Social Connectedness to Flourish

- Social Connections are critical to a human being's emotional and physical well-being
- Love heals. Love helps us flourish.
- Social exclusion and loneliness leads to depression and other health problems

Overcoming Communication Barriers with Meditation

- Being Emotionally Disturbed

Meditation helps relieve stress and anxiety (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007)

- Being Unable to Listen

Meditation helps develop active listening skills – listening with attention and caring

- Unconscious Patterns of Thinking/
Vasanas

Meditation increases self-awareness

- Being Judgmental / Feeling Judged

Mindfulness meditation promotes openness and a non-judgmental attitude (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

Communication and Meditation Tip # 1

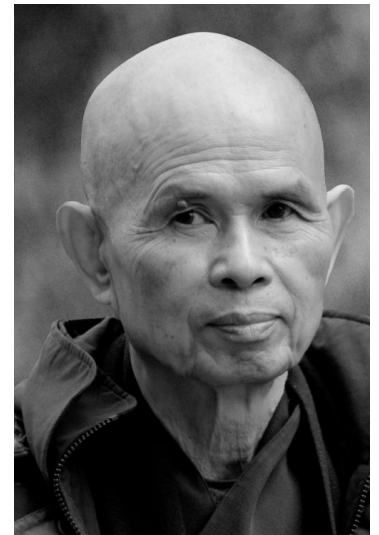
Overcome Anger: When you are emotionally disturbed next time...

Bring your attention to the breath.
Breathe in and out consciously before you speak.

Breathing in, I calm my body.

Breathing out, I smile

-



Thich Nhat Hanh

<https://plumvillage.org/thich-nhat-hanh/press-photos/>

MA OM Mastery Over Mind

Common Relationship Contexts

- Parent-Child
- At School and University
- Other Close Relationships
- Workplace

Parent-Child Communication Improves with Mindfulness/Meditation

Encourage your parents to meditate 😊

- Mindfulness practices by parents can improve mother-adolescent communication (Lippold et al. 2015)
 - Negative reactions to disclosure
 - Adolescent feelings of parental over-control
 - Affective quality of the interaction

Understanding How Mindful Parenting May Be Linked to Mother-Adolescent Communication

Melissa A. Lippold¹ • Larissa G. Duncan² • J. Douglas Coatsworth³ • Robert L. Nix⁴ • Mark T. Greenberg⁵

Improve the Quality of Friendships at University with Meditation 😊

- Meditation/ Mindfulness help us to become more **self-aware** and conscious of our thoughts and emotions.
- Friendship quality improves when friends are self-aware, accepting, non-reactive, and have a high degree of empathy (Pratscher et al. 2018) .

Communication and Meditation Tip # 2: Improve Relationships: Respond rather than React

- When we **react** there is **no gap** between thought and words, or between words and action. Conflicts and misunderstandings may arise.
- We should try and **respond**. We can do this by expanding the gap between our thoughts and words, and words and actions.
- Meditation can help us to cultivate awareness and **respond** rather than **react**.



Improve the Quality of Other Close Relationships with Mindful Communication and Meditation

Meditate and Enjoy Togetherness in Harmony 😊

Mindfulness improves quality of communication leading to increased relationship satisfaction (Gambrel & Keeling, 2010; Whitney & Chang, 2022)

Meditation Has A Positive Impact On Workplace Relationships And Leadership

- Increases team cooperation (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn 2018)
- Mindfulness training improves leader's behaviour toward employees by making them more attentive and open (Johnson et al. 2019)
- Meditation has been found to improve employee communication skills (Good et al. 2015; Pradhan & Ajithkumar 2018)

Caveat: *Meditation is not a Magic Pill that Improves Interpersonal Communication or Relationships*

- We need the *lakshya* or goal to improve our interpersonal communication skills and our relationships.
- We need persistence and patience, communication skills will not improve overnight 😊
- In short, **Intention** and **Attitude** are Important

Communication and Meditation Tip # 3: Right Speech Meditation

सत्यं वद, प्रियं वद

Let your speech be **truthful, pleasant and useful**.

Right timing and your intention is Important

Take a Deep Breath. Be Aware of the Inhalation and Exhalation.

Ask yourself *“Is what I am saying **truthful, pleasant, and useful**? Is the **timing** right? What is **my intention**? Is it to help or to just speak or to show how clever I am ?*

Communication and Meditation Tip # 4: Telephone Meditation

Breathing in, you say: '*Words can travel thousands of miles;*'

Breathing out: '*They are supposed to build up more understanding and mutual acceptance;*'

Breathing in, '*I vow that my words will be like gems;*'

Breathing out, '*I vow that my words will be fresh like flowers.*'

Thich Nhat Hanh

Source: <https://buddhismnow.com/2014/05/03/telephone-meditation-by-thich-nhat-hanh/>

Mastery of Mind Gives You Inner Power

“In fact, power is a state that helps you to be happy, peaceful, and strong however challenging the external situation may be. It is something that gives you the capacity to **have the right thought, to say the right word, and to do the right thing at the right time.** That is power,” he said, adding that it is an experience that comes through **mastery of the mind**” <https://www.amritapuri.org/81769/22youth.aum>

- Swami Shubamritananda Puri



Mastery Over Mind



लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु.

References ...1

- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological inquiry*, 18(4), 211-237.
- Gambrel, L. E., & Keeling, M. L. (2010). Relational aspects of mindfulness: Implications for the practice of marriage and family therapy. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 32(4), 412-426.
- Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., ... & Lazar, S. W. (2016). Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of management*, 42(1), 114-142
- Johnson, Karen R., Sunyoung Park, and Sanghamitra Chaudhuri. "Mindfulness training in the workplace: Exploring its scope and outcomes." *European Journal of Training and Development* (2020).
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go. There you are: mindfulness meditation in in everyday life*. Hachette: New York

References ... 2

- Lippold, M. A., Duncan, L. G., Coatsworth, J. D., Nix, R. L., & Greenberg, M. T. (2015). Understanding how mindful parenting may be linked to mother–adolescent communication. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 44(9), 1663-1673.
- Pradhan, S., & Ajithkumar, V. V. (2019, February). Effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation on Communication Skills of Employees. In *SIMSARC 2018: Proceedings of the 9th Annual International Conference on 4C's-Communication, Commerce, Connectivity, Culture, SIMSARC 2018, 17-19 December 2018, Pune, MH, India* (p. 158). European Alliance for Innovation.
- Pratscher, S. D., Rose, A. J., Markovitz, L., & Bettencourt, A. (2018). Interpersonal mindfulness: Investigating mindfulness in interpersonal interactions, co-rumination, and friendship quality. *Mindfulness*, 9(4), 1206-1215.
- Whitney, J., & Chang, D. F. (2020). Inner tradition made visible: the interpersonal benefits and effects of meditation practice on close relationships. *Current Psychology*, 1-11.
- Yu, L., & Zellmer-Bruhn, M. (2018). Introducing team mindfulness and considering its safeguard role against conflict transformation and social undermining. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(1), 324-347.