

Here are some suggestions for working with mindful speech in your daily lives. See if you can work with them for the next few weeks, and observe for yourself what helps you to be mindful of your speech.

(1) See if you can pause before speaking.

If you can do this, then you have caught the intention to speak, and you have a chance to be mindful for the next few moments of speaking. Sometimes it can be difficult to do this in certain conversations (for example, work conversations where you won't get a chance to speak if you pause.) A suggestion for that situation (from Non-violent communication work) is to rephrase what was last said, as a way to slow down the conversation -- for example, "As I understand what you just said..." If you remember to do this, you have also caught the intention to speak, and you again have a chance to be mindful in the next few moments of speech.

(2) If you remember to pause, take a moment to recognize whether you know what you are about to say, and also what the motivation is behind it. If you can notice these two things, reflect on whether this is something that you actually do want to say! You have a choice about whether or not to speak at this point.

(3) Try to track whether you are agitated or not agitated while you speak.

Rather than trying to keep track of the full range of emotional states while you speak, start with just tracking these two: whether you are agitated or not. Agitation will usually signal something to pay attention to.

(4) If you find it nearly impossible to remember to do the above three exercises throughout your day, see if you can find someone who is willing to practice them with you a few times in the next couple of weeks. Pick a time (say over a lunch-date) that you agree to speak with these considerations in mind.

(5) Include awareness of wise speech in your exploration.

The practice of wise speech is usually phrased in terms of types of speech to avoid. The four types of unwise speech are

- false speech
- divisive speech: Speech that creates division between people
- abusive speech: unfriendly, harsh, hostile speech
- idle chatter: useless, meaningless speech

Our task is not so much to blindly follow these as hard and fast rules, but rather to pay attention when this type of speech comes up, and in particular to see if we can notice the motivation or intention behind the speech.

Play with mindful speech. Explore what helps you remember to practice it. Explore what helps you while you are practicing it.