

**Practicing with Wise Speech**  
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Alameda Sangha, Jan. 13, 2019

These exercises are designed to practice ways of looking at your own experiences related to each part of the Eightfold Path. This month, we explore Wise Speech. Working with each of these exercises for a week should *develop skills* that will help you continue to reduce dukkha caused by unwise speech.

**Week 1 – Studying Intention in Communication**

- 1) Early in the week, during a low-stress conversation, consciously explore how you physically *feel* about what you or someone else says. How does the intention to be kind or helpful make you feel as you listen and speak? You may want to review those feelings during your next meditation.
- 2) Make an effort at least once a day to be mindful during some conversation. Observe when you are wanting to be helpful and kind, or not. How does this intention effect what you say?
- 3) If you notice that you have spoken in a way that wasn't kind or helpful, how does that make you *feel*?

**Week 2 – Practicing Truthfulness**

- 1) Continue practicing mindfulness during conversations, and especially notice times when you're inclined to say something you're not sure is true. Do you *feel* any discomfort at such times? Practice pausing and relaxing when you feel discomfort arise, before speaking.
- 2) Note in your journal how you handled the urge to say something untrue. Explore your feelings about that, especially the uncomfortable ones, the dukkha. Be kind to yourself, and see if it's comforting to renew the intention to be kind, helpful and truthful in the future.
- 3) If you see any motives to bend the truth arise repeatedly during the week, note them in your journal and investigate the views behind them.

**Week 3 – Practicing Appropriate Times and Types of Speaking**

- 1) Notice when you're in a conversation that involves a lot of "idle chatter" or gossip. Be conscious of how you feel about what's being said, and how you want to participate. Is what you're inclined to say truthful, kind, helpful and conveyed so that people are likely to understand what was intended?
- 2) Spend time each day *listening* mindfully, aware of how you're affected by what's being said. Try to hear whatever is said with an attitude of respect and goodwill toward the speaker, to receive what they're wanting to express. Also make an effort to listen to your *own* thoughts talking to yourself, and bring kindness and goodwill toward yourself, while checking on the truthfulness of what your thoughts say about you.
- 3) Watch for instances when harsh speech is used by you or others. Notice how you feel using it or receiving it. Was it word choice, tone of voice, body language, or facial expressions that expressed harsh feelings? If you speak harshly, investigate what compelled you to do that, and note those motives in your journal, along with the views that gave rise to them.