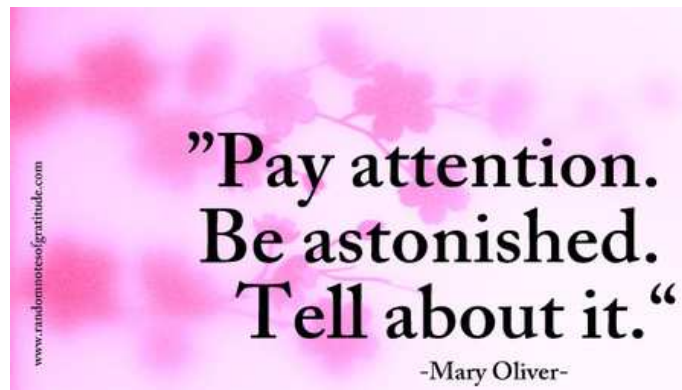


# RELATIONAL SPEECH: A Practice to Cultivate Connection

“The nature of reality is conversational.” ~David Whyte, poet, author, speaker

I'm excited to share with you a mindfulness practice that I call *Relational Speech*. I find the practice deceptively simple. And yet, for you and I to embrace the discipline of this structured way of communicating is bound to be healing, transformative and liberating. I imagine that you've noticed how in normal conversation something crucial is oftentimes missing. Do you, like me, long for real nourishment in your relationships? I trust that both you and I are ready for true meeting, ready for connection and depth in our relational life. And so, I'm now offering you *Relational Speech*, an opportunity to practice the art of deep listening and authentic speech. Together in heartfelt conversation, you and I can experience the fullness of being human, the joy of feeling deeply connected, interconnected, at peace. “Connection is everything,” says Stephen W. Porges, author of *The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe*.



## Ten disciplines practiced in *Relational Speech*

1. **Maintaining clarity of intention.** In listening and speaking we are both aiming for:
  - i) Connection
  - ii) Authenticity
2. **Abiding by the structure of this mindfulness practice:**
  - i) Only *one* sentence of speech at a time, taking turns.
  - ii) Each sentence references both of us, using “*I*” and “*you*.”  
E.g. “*I* hear *you*.” “*I* don’t know what *you* mean.” “*Your* words touch *my* heart.” “*I* wonder if *you*...” “Do *you* like *my* ...?” “*I*’m uncomfortable with what *you* said.” “*I*’m glad that *you*...”
  - iii) Sustain the practice for about 10 minutes. Debrief in an informal, non-structured way.
3. **Paying attention**, shifting *from* the habit of *not* being present to oneself or the other.
4. **Listening fully**, doing our best to ensure that the other feels heard, seen, met, safe.
5. **Offering eye contact**, remaining present regardless of discomfort, irritation, or resistance.
6. **Balancing listening and speaking**, shifting *from* the habit of one or the other taking over. We each have *exactly one sentence* to express ourselves. And we each have *exactly one sentence* to receive from the other. The structure of this practice ensures fairness, reciprocity,

and mutuality – as well as engagement, aliveness, and connection.

7. **Pausing before speaking**, rather than a quick come-back.
8. **Becoming aware of what is noticed**: quality of breath, perceptions, sensations, feelings, thoughts, reactivity, habits, desires, wants, core intentions... *This is meditation, being present.*
9. **Giving authentic expression** to present moment experiencing, one sentence at a time. E.g. “I appreciate you for...” “I worry when you...” “You annoy me.” “I love you.” “I get your point.”
10. **Being willing to show up**, to be transparent, vulnerable, honest. We are using language to reveal, rather than conceal. We are shifting paradigms, from ‘power-over’ to ‘power-with.’

### Ten benefits experienced in practicing *Relational Speech*

1. **The joy of coming present**, being engaged, feeling accompanied.
2. **Co-regulation of physiological states**, consciously calming the nervous system, feeling more relaxed, centred, and present. Thus, we gain access to **creativity in problem-solving**.
3. **Balancing the right and left hemispheres** of the brain. Our default mode of relating keeps us over-identified with the left hemisphere where we easily objectify self and other, unable to *feel* connected. And, the right hemisphere – with its capacity for empathy, relationality, attuned to the bigger perspective – is sadly left dormant. We need the resources of an *integrated* brain.
4. **Expressing and resolving difficult emotions**. Note: The practice of *Relational Speech* can also be used in role-plays to help bring resolution to conflictual situations.
5. **Expanding literacy for relational communication**, enjoying a more fluid vocabulary for feelings, emotions, sensations, longings, qualities of being alive.
6. **Growing agility, confidence and competence** in communicating skilfully, artfully, effectively.
7. **Building the capacity to empathize and connect** with oneself and another. This elevates the quality of our conversations, our relationships, our life.
8. **Discovery of hidden treasures** of the human psyche.
9. **Aligning with presence**, the joy of being consciously aware, touching depth of being.
10. **Attuning to the unity of the relational field**, the interconnected fabric of the whole of life.

### Sources of Inspiration

“Humans are wired for connection, belonging, and resonance with other humans. The ability to be both *experiencing* and *holding the experience* is the key to maintaining inner calm in the face of life’s challenges.”

~Sarah Peyton, *Your Resonant Self: Guided Meditations and Exercises to Engage Your Brain’s Capacity for Healing*

“Your presence is the most precious gift you can give another human being.”

~Marshall B. Rosenberg, founder of the *Center for Nonviolent Communication*

“If you enter every conversation with assuming you have something to learn, you will never be disappointed.”

~Celeste Headlee, *We Need to Talk: How to Have Conversations that Matter*

“Mindfulness is the energy that allows us to look deeply at our body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness and see what our real needs are, so we will not drown in the sea of suffering.”

~Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love*