

Inside-Outside Same: Empathic Listening and Conscious Speaking for Sustainable Well-Being

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Abstract

This 30 min presentation will focus on our ability to listen empathically to ourselves and others, the language choices that we make in both our inner and outer dialogues, and how these have an impact on the health and wellbeing of our Selves, our relationships, and our social and ecological communities. Drawing on the work of Dr. Marshall Rosenberg (2003), Peter Block (2008), Parker Palmer (2004) and Swami Sivananda Radha (2004), this presentation will offer ideas and practices for empathic listening and conscious response, and will provide several experiential opportunities for the audience.

When it comes to listening, we often focus merely on ideas, and overlook the information presented to us by our bodies. Turning our attention to body and breath, and learning ways to balance our attention between our senses can improve our ability to understand clearly what others are communicating, as well as our ability to discern the voice of our own inner guidance. When we extend this practice of deep and empathic listening to the land, we can begin to choose actions that will be in harmony with All Our Relations, respecting the limits of the natural world.

Our speech choices matter, and they stem directly from our attitudes, focus of attention, and inner dialogue. By practicing mindfulness, awareness, and choice as we speak - both to ourselves and others - we create a more positive experience for everyone as we add our voice to the collective creative process. The structure of our speech matters as well, as by our phrasing, we can include or exclude, create or destroy. Conscious speaking practices open spaces for dialogue, and acknowledge the "other" as a valid contributor, shifting our relationships with the disadvantaged, underprivileged, oppressed and exploited beings in both the human and "more-than-human" worlds (Abrams 1996).

When it comes to wellbeing, we need to address the personal, the social, and the ecological. These worlds are complex and it requires self-awareness, humility, and compassion to navigate them in a sustainable way. Our curriculum and pedagogies need to reflect this.