

# Becoming more present while listening and speaking

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## Start with intention

In Buddhist thought, motivation is understood to influence what happens on many levels and to contribute to the results of our actions of body, speech and mind. Yet we often are on automatic pilot about awareness of our motivation, intention or aspiration. We can consciously become more aware of our motivation/intention/aspiration during listening, speaking, or writing.

Connect more deeply to your heart and mind. Get in touch with your deepest wishes. Ask “What matters most?” or “How do I truly want to be as a human being in the community of life?” Note it or jot it down:

“May I \_\_\_\_\_”.

If the communication is with a group, also become aware of your aspiration/intention for the collective gathering, which may be different than your personal intention:

“May we \_\_\_\_\_”.

## Ways to enhance calm presence, good-heartedness, and clear awareness

Based on meditative qualities and practices

### Calm presence

- Pause whatever is going on in your mind and attention;
- Use awareness of your physical sensations of the body standing or sitting to pay attention to the present moment of your experience;
- Join one’s mind together with the body in the present moment as best you can;
- Use your inner experience of the present moment as an anchor, while opening to the other person or situation.
- Keep pausing and coming back to your present-moment anchor as you listen or speak.  
(Meditative qualities: concentration, one-pointed focus, present moment awareness.)

### Good-heartedness

- Warm and expand your innate good heart;
- Sincerely aspire to be of benefit to self and others;
- Bring your attention to your heart area and imagine breathing through the heart;
- Think of a time, person, pet, or symbol that is associated with caring, kindness, warmth, or compassion, and let yourself receive or bathe in that quality as best you can;
- Use the qualities of good heart/caring as an anchor in the present moment, while opening to the other person or situation.
- Remember that the person you are with suffers and wants to be happy, just like you.  
(Meditative qualities: loving kindness, compassion, impartial well-wishing.)

### Clear awareness

- Stay aware of your stream of experience of thoughts, emotions and sensations as best you can, with as much curiosity, relaxation, and openness as possible;
- Keep your attention balanced between awareness of your inner experience and awareness of what you are hearing or seeing from and with others;
- When judgements, reactivity or emotional intensity happen (they almost certainly will), that’s ok. Try to get a sense of what is being triggered, though sometimes just noticing that you’re contracted or worked up is all that is possible. Experiment with making more space around your reactions; call upon good-heartedness for self or others, stay quiet and breathe rather than speaking right away.
- When you lose awareness or become absorbed in the other person, try shifting attention back to calm presence or good heartedness, or resting your focus more deeply on the other person’s words/energy.
- Remember this is your experience - others may be having a very different experience.  
(Meditative qualities: mindfulness, equanimity, clear perception)