

Silence

Faculty Guide

Framing

In this lesson, students will consider the role of silence (individual practice) in promoting a thriving team. The practice promotes safety and inclusivity and increases team members (especially new team members) sense of belonging.

Definition

Silence – Freeing oneself from the addiction to distraction and noise in order to be totally present

Student Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Describe the practice of silence.
- Describe the implementation of silence in a scientific setting.
- Demonstrate ability to self-assess their ability to listen and the impact it has on their current team.

Key Concepts Discussed in Student Materials

Two of the features of a thriving community are *safety* and *inclusion.* The practice of silence help to promote these team characteristics.

- Silence begins with choosing not to speak, but it is not just the absence of speaking. It is about shifting the focus from having yourself and your ideas heard to hearing the ideas and needs of others.
  - Silence creates space to increase listening skills
  - Silence requires patience and waiting, which creates space for other people and their ideas
  - Silence will prepare team members to implement the belonging cues such as, intensive, active listening and discussions characterized by mixing and hearing all voices.
- Elements of listening *well* include:
  (1) Creating a safe environment – one in which difficult, complex, or emotional issues can be discussed safely.
  (2) Clearing away distractions like phones and laptops, focusing attention on the other person and making appropriate eye-contact.
  (3) Seeking to understand the substance of what the other person is saying. Good listeners capture ideas, ask questions, and restate issues to confirm that their understanding is correct.
  (4) Observing non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, perspiration, respiration rates, gestures, posture, and numerous other subtle body language signals. It is estimated that 80% of what we communicate comes from these signals. (We listen with your eyes as well as our ears.)
  (5) Increasingly understanding the other person's emotions and feelings about the topic at hand and identifying and acknowledging them in a supportive, nonjudgmental way.
  (6) Asking questions that clarify assumptions the other person holds and helping the other person to see the issue in a new light. A good listener may inject thoughts and ideas about the topic that could be useful to the other person, but good listeners do not highjack the conversation so that they or their issues become the subject of the discussion.

Student Assignments

1) Choose one of more of the following to try this week. Choose one that is not already a habit for you where possible.

- Set aside your phone and laptop when someone is having a conversation with you so that you can give the conversation your full attention.
- Try to get through a whole conversation without relating what someone else says to your own experience. Instead, ask follow-up questions to better understand their ideas or experience.
- If you are someone who jumps in quickly to discussions or brainstorming sessions, try counting to 10 before you answer to give others who gather their thoughts more slowly time to think or respond.
- Commit to speaking words of kindness and encouragement at least three times each day. If you find yourself starting to speak unkind or complaining words, stop and choose silence instead.

2) During class (either as part of the whole class or during a small group discussion time), take time to listen carefully to another student's response to a question. Challenge yourself to ask the other student a follow up question to make sure that you understand their point of view or what they are saying.

Student Journaling Prompts

- What is silence and what is its role in a team setting?
- Was this practice comfortable or uncomfortable for you? Did listening in this particular way change the way you engaged during class? Was it any different than the way you typically listen to other students during a class period?

Discussion Questions

- Reflect on what observed/experienced related to the silence activity that students selected to practice this week. *If you selected an activity, reflect on your own experience as well.*
- Consider this question together: There are times in a team setting when it is important that your voice and your ideas are heard. How do you know when it is then appropriate to practice silence?