

Wise Speech Reflections

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Common Ground Meditation

1. How to commit to the **truth** without the mind becoming attached to the idea of being right?

The truth is not something that can be owned by one person. The truth is not something that one becomes certain of, rather, it is possible to value the open investigation that moves one's understanding in the direction of what is true. See Bhikkhu Bodhi's comments on p. 48 in Noble Eightfold Path.

2. Notice the subtle and not so subtle violence of **interrupting** in all of its expressions. Notice how the aversive qualities of impatience and boredom can color our speech.

3. How best to become aware of the inevitable **power** dynamics that arise whenever interacting with another person (even in moments of seemingly playful banter). Notice all the ways the mind uses power especially those ways that are harmful to self and other. Notice that this misuse of power can be expressed both through what is said, but also by the ways we use volume, tone, and body language. Notice what the mind does when it discerns a perceived weakness in another. Does the mind exploit this weakness/vulnerability by saying or doing something that creates a strategic power imbalance? Is it wrong to manipulate another in order to get them to agree with our point of view? What is the difference between manipulation and a skillful give and take of ideas.

4. Become aware of flattery, **exuberance, and expressing familiarity** with another person. What effect is the mind looking for? What harm, if any, is being done?

5. Notice times of **idle speech**, speech where the content doesn't appear to have any lasting significance. How can idle speech be a means for expressing affection and goodwill? When is idle speech a means to take care of some semi conscious emotional need? For example, we might use idle speech to diffuse the discomfort of silence.

6. Notice times where we **leave things unsaid**. What is motivating the silence? Notice how fear affects what and how much we say. Notice the mind's attachment to a superficial social harmony (not rocking the boat) and times when this dependence leads to longer term problems because important issues are not being brought up. Notice moments of fearlessness when we are willing to speak up and say what needs to be said, not knowing how things are going to unfold from

there.

7. Notice how challenging it can be to **say what we mean**. Often, the first thing out of our mouth is not what we really want to say or what actually needs to be said, instead, it was what was easy to say. For example, how many times have we said something like, "That would be wonderful." when in fact we were quite concerned with what was being presented. Notice what happens to our speech when we are excited or have too much energy, (Perhaps due to too much caffeine or alcohol).

8. Notice whenever you are asking another person **questions**. What is the underlying motivation behind the question(s)? Are the questions designed to get needed information? Are they expressing aversion or frustration, greed or excitement, or are the questions a means to create doubt or discomfort in the other and thereby feel more in control? What would happen if we were to explain whenever we ask a question why it is that we are asking it.

9. Reflect on the ways you rely on **restraint** while speaking. How does this wholesome force of concern and regret operate in your life. What might happen without its presence in the mind?

10. Reflect on the ways speech is the means through which the **beautiful emotions** of lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity, gratitude, forgiveness, and patience are expressed.

11. Reflect on times when our speech seemed to arise naturally out of a depth of wise mindful presence. Remember moments of saying the right thing at the right time in the right manner. What conditions of mind supported this **skillful/appropriate speech**? What if anything got in the way?

12. Reflect on the times when speech was not an improvement on **silence**. Remember moments the mind was compelled to fill up the empty space of silence because of its fear or mistrust of quiet. Notice moments of real communication and connection that arise without the necessity of speech.