

Communications Calendar

Lesson 6 provided a deep dive into 'people stress', something that I am sure we are all familiar with.

The workplace can create the perfect conditions for this kind of stress: we will encounter people with different views and approaches, and it is easy to misinterpret information and intentions. In addition to this, we are all under similar pressures to perform at work, to deliver on expectations or against specific goals or targets, and our intrinsic need to belong and our fear of being judged unfavourably can further heighten our reactions and vulnerability to stress.

The mindfulness skills we have been learning and practising so far in this course are contributing to a growing capacity to work with all forms of stress in new and helpful ways, helping us to affect a speedier recovery. As is explained in lesson 6, it is worth paying mindful attention to communication because this is often trigger-point - I am sure we can all relate to the experience of a difficult conversation, confrontation, or hard-to-hear feedback from a colleague or manager. I am sure we can also relate to the adhesive thinking, worrying, or re-running of a situation that can sweep in or creep up on us.

"Once you can communicate with yourself, you'll be able to communicate outwardly with more clarity."

Thich Nhat Hanh

As we have learnt, mindfulness helps us to stand-back and to notice, to be able to understand ourselves and situations better, to achieve a wider and more accurate view by noticing:

- how we feel (emotionally)
- our perceptions (of others and the situations we encounter)
- thoughts and ideas that arise in the mind
- impulsive behaviours and reactions
- physical responses in the body during and following a challenging communication

A Communications Calendar is often used in mindfulness to help us reflect and begin to generate this awareness. I have included an example below. Use the template to capture your honest reflections on past or current communication difficulties; this can reveal any unhelpful patterns of unconscious reactivity, assumptions, and perceptions. For example, we may be able to notice a tendency to switch-off to someone else's view, speak over them, or to close down a conversation that is not going our way. In any case, becoming more conscious of the points bulleted above during challenging conversations can only ever help a situation. We can practice in retrospect using the template below and begin to hone these skills so they come online when we need them.

Communications Calendar

Example

<p>The conversation – who it was with and what it was about?</p>	<p><i>It was with someone who reports to me; she sent an email that outlined an issue.</i></p>
<p>What was the aim of the communication?</p>	<p><i>I called an ad hoc meeting to discuss the email.</i></p>
<p>What was your intended outcome?</p>	<p><i>Ensure she didn't send such an email again as it exposed an oversight in my team to people in other teams.</i></p>
<p>What outcome do you think the other person wanted?</p>	<p><i>To explain the issue and to get my support for the solution she had instigated.</i></p>
<p>How did you feel during the communication – in the body and emotionally?</p>	<p><i>I was in 'telling off' mode. Quite 'charged' and in control. Energised in my body, slightly adrenalized.</i></p>
<p>How do you feel now? What thoughts and ideas are around?</p>	<p><i>At first, I thought 'mission accomplished', she went away chastised and in no doubt of my view. Now, I'm not sure I listened or gave her a chance to speak. There were probably pieces of information I lacked. Was I a bit too sensitive and concerned by optics – by how things looked on the outside of the team? I can feel the 'charged' feeling in my body now as I remember the communication – it was probably defensiveness. I didn't trust the judgement or solution-based actions of a valued and respected team member. I feel a bit ashamed and sad now.</i></p>

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Your turn!

<p>The conversation – who it was with and what it was about?</p>	
<p>What was the aim of the communication?</p>	
<p>What was your intended outcome?</p>	
<p>What outcome do you think the other person wanted?</p>	
<p>How did you feel during the communication – in the body and emotionally?</p>	
<p>How do you feel now? What thoughts and ideas are around?</p>	