

Instructions for Insight Dialogue

Insight dialogue (Kramer 2008) is a powerful vehicle for formal and informal interpersonal meditation practice that has helped many people free themselves from interpersonal suffering. It's comprised of six components, which may be employed in formal practice or utilized anywhere, anytime: pause, open, relax, trust emergence, listen deeply, and speak the truth. The following brief review of these intentions has been drawn from *The Mindful Path through Shyness* and is meant to provide an introduction to Insight Dialogue and the guidelines for practice. For a comprehensive study of these instructions please buy Gregory Kramer's *Insight Dialogue* (2008) or visit <http://www.metta.org/practices/insightDialogueMain.htm> .

Pause is a reminder to yourself, given inwardly, to stop for a little while. But what stops? It's the habit mind, the compelling intrigue of your own thoughts. So pause is a call to stop and shift fully into awareness, into the here and now. At this moment, you may notice what thoughts, emotions, and sensations are coursing through you, with all of their elements of desire and aversion. Pausing can illuminate what's happening with you as you listen or talk to others. Pausing corresponds to meditation practice itself.

Relax is an intention you bring to the tension you find in your body when you settle into the pause. You may notice what the tensing is related to as you feel into the tightness or contraction with curiosity and acceptance. With a scary thought, you pause, relax, and begin again. You let everything be and invite the part of your body that's tense to let go. You turn toward whatever you're holding in your body and simultaneously toward your mind with loving-kindness and compassion. You let it be and let it go again and again.

Open involves extending the friendly acceptance and mindfulness you cultivating in your personal meditation practice to the external world and specifically to those you're engaged with in communication. It's an agenda-free receptivity toward the external world that may be first cultivated personally, independent of others. Opening to nature can be a good place to begin, providing a context in which you can feel very safe in opening. You can open to a forest or an ocean, the sky or the desert, or even a flower. Open your heart – extend loving kindness where you like. You might go for a walk in the rain or find a place where you can open to a star-filled night.

Trust emergence invites you to remain poised in the open space that you've created by pausing and relaxing. You allow whatever may come up without rushing in to fill the space out of some need or discomfort. Think of it as trusting that something will emerge when the moment is right, or trusting whatever emerges, without clinging to the past or preconceptions about the future. In social contexts, it means allowing the conversation to form within the interaction without trying to control or manipulate it. Trust emergence is being present, on purpose, in this ever-changing moment with acceptance of whatever arises.

Listen deeply means becoming a receptive field that receives the words and feelings expressed by another person. The invitation is to listen with kindness and compassion and

allow yourself to be touched by another human being. This kind of listening is patient, nonjudging, and free from personal agendas. The attitude of listening deeply is a willingness to feel with and experience the thoughts and feelings of another human being without *personalizing* what you hear, meaning misinterpreting it on the basis of your personal concepts or preferences.

Speak the truth means to be honest with the person you're interacting with. It's straight talk in the sense of saying things as you perceive them to be. The intention is to express what's useful and appropriate with attention to goodwill and without cruelty. This is the union of mindfulness with virtue, morality, and mutuality. Is what you are saying true? Is it beneficial? Is it kind? Is it offered in goodwill? It's important to consider all of these questions, as speaking the truth calls for not only honesty, but also a sincere intention not to injure others. A helpful guideline is to consider the golden rule and speak to others as you would like to be spoken to.

You can use any of these powerful tools for interpersonal mindfulness, either singly or in combination, in your day-to-day communications with others. The following exercises will help you use four of these tools—pause, relax, open, and listen deeply—to investigate your experiences in interpersonal relationships. Using some simple intentions and interactions, you'll apply these skills to recognize the ways you create distress in your life with desire and aversion. As the ways you create distress become more evident, you can draw from mindfulness, acceptance, and loving-kindness to make more skillful choices.

It may be best to stay with each exercise for at least a day before going on to the next. At the end of each day that you practice these skills, take a little time to write in your journal about your experiences. Note exactly what you did, where, and with whom, as well as what you discovered. In your journal, acknowledge the sensations, emotions, and thoughts you experienced as you engaged in these interpersonal awareness practices. Also be aware of how you feel as you sit to write about these experiences, and consider writing about that, as well. As you engage in these practices, know that being present with and for other people is precious and worth every bit of effort you extend and congratulate yourself for having the courage and commitment to do this.