**Six Simple Habits of Speaking Up**

It is not easy for all of us to suddenly begin speaking up in the world. There is no single template for speaking up: it looks different for each person and in each situation. With that in mind, here are simple habits you can practice to help you be successful at it and develop your own style.

**1.    Be Mindful**

By cultivating mindfulness we are more likely to recognize opportunities to do good. If we see something that needs to be acknowledged like a hateful magazine on a shelf, mindfulness allows us to recognize that fact before we are on our way home and it is too late to say something.

Mindfulness also helps us discern when and when not to speak up. There is a difference between expressing ourselves for our own sake and speaking up for something that benefits everyone. Speaking up authentically should benefit others in some way, and mindfulness allows us to discern those moments by listening to that still, small voice inside of us.

**2.    Show Kindness**

When speaking up, we may feel that we have to overcome someone else. Instead, we can use kindness to enroll the other person in our vision. In [Adam Galinsky’s TED talk](https://go.ted.com/CyQu), he calls this “gaining allies.” It amplifies our effort by bringing others on board. When the Dalai Lama said “[My religion is kindness](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/991679.Kindness_Clarity_and_Insight),” he showed us that kindness is more than just an attitude.  Kindness has the power to connect at a personal level even when others may disagree on an intellectual level.

Yet being kind is not being nicey-nicey. Kindness can include being authentic and direct, we just have to include compassion when doing so.

**3.    See and acknowledge all sides**

When I spoke to the manager, I only voiced my view after acknowledging that others may have a different perspective. Seeing all sides allows us to understand how our cause may resonate for other people. We can then speak directly to their humanity, rather than trying to convince them to agree with us. Galinsky calls this “perspective taking.” A person is more likely to be willing to see things our way if they feel like we understand their point of view.

**4.    Assume commonality**

The outside labels that define us are not who we really are, rather they arise from conclusions we have drawn from past experiences. The yogi Swami Satchidananda said that these conclusions “de-fine” us—they take us from being fine to not fine. Labels build artificial barriers that disconnect us from each other. If we can see past a person’s learned reactions in order to see the shared human emotions underneath, we can create connection. That connection allows us to speak up more authentically, respectfully and effectively.

**5.    Don’t be attached to a particular outcome**

Speaking up is about *you*, and the culture of action that you create in your own habits. You don’t have control over the response you get. What is important is building the habit of speaking up, increasing mindfulness, and building a society that *notices*. In doing so you give others the courage to speak up.

When I spoke to the store manager, I had no expectation of action from him. I spoke up because I needed to live with my own conscience. The fact that it was successful is gravy. If we get attached to success in our action, we are more likely to get discouraged and talk ourselves out of it, thinking “oh, that will never work, why bother.” Then nothing happens.

**6.    Set the stage for synchronicity**

When we do these things and step forward, something amazing happens: I suspect the cosmos is designed to respond constructively to our action. I have been intrigued by this in my life, and it is the reason I developed a theory on [the physics of synchronicity](http://skynelson.com/the-science), or meaningful coincidences.

When we speak up, the universe brings about hidden opportunities. Opportunity: the manager may have been itching to remove that magazine, and coincidence bringing us together at that moment allowed it to happen. Opportunity: maybe somebody in line saw the interaction and it encouraged them to speak up in their own life. Opportunity: after reading about the experience, a connection of mine initiated a very meaningful conversation with me around this issue. These were all hidden opportunities for connection that happened because I set the stage by speaking up.

I also find that little signposts emerge synchronistically which help me navigate to the next step in speaking up. For instance, in the 24 hours after deciding to write about this topic, I casually ran across Galinsky’s TED talk on my phone, but *not* while researching the post. Since his expertise on the psychology of speaking up helped clarify my views, finding that video at that moment is an example of a coincidence timed perfectly to assist me in my own process of speaking up.

Synchronicity is nature’s way of weaving lives together. The universe is a canvass waiting for us to step forward with ideas and convictions, so it can respond in supportive ways that guide us. We should make it a habit!

**A Culture of Speaking Up**

In creating a culture of speaking up, we don’t have to fight against people. Instead we connect with them as citizens instead of as opponents or cogs in the machine. We change the system by connecting with people, leading by example and speaking from the heart. We become more aware of our mutual interconnectedness and of our own personal leadership role in society.

We can speak up *against*something hurtful, or we can speak up *for*something constructive. Either way, our speaking up makes ripples in the world. By creating a culture of speaking up, we will put into motion a wave of synchronistic events whose impact is unpredictable. As long as we are using mindfulness to carefully choose when to speak up, then the “follow-up synchronicities” will support the wellbeing of ourselves and those around us. My hope is that this cultural shift will demonstrate that love and kindness are more powerful than we have so far imagined.

Excerpted from: [Six Habits That Create a Culture of Speaking Up](http://www.dailykos.com/stories/2016/12/21/1613220/-Six-Habits-That-Create-a-Culture-of-Speaking-Up)