



Why Speech?

REASONS WE CHOOSE TO TALK



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INTRODUCTION

Read through some common motivations for speaking up (p. 1) and staying silent (p. 2). Put a ★ next to any that feel true for you. Make notes in the margins to indicate the contexts or the specific incidents you associate with a certain motivation. Feel free to edit or add to what is here so that it is more accurate for you personally.

What feelings does this reflection bring up for you? What new ideas or insights does it yield?

EXPRESSION ± UNDERSTANDING

I'm driven to share my beliefs and experiences. I want to understand and be understood. Giving and receiving validation is important to me.

CURIOSITY ± CRITICAL ANALYSIS

I want to interrogate how we all arrive at our ideas, mindsets, beliefs, and worldviews. I think best "out loud." I want to ask questions but also draw conclusions.

YIELDING TO PRESSURE

I feel coerced or trapped into speaking--it's for a class/grade, I'm the only one in my identity group present, or I've been directly called on or called out.

PERFORMANCE ± PROVOCATION

I want to produce an emotional reaction or make people think. I want to make people laugh or feel shocked, sad, angry, ashamed, or driven to act.

WINNING

I want to be acknowledged as the most articulate, knowledgeable, experienced, or smart one in this conversation, even if the other one doesn't like or agree with me.

INTERVENTION

I feel compelled to critique or attempt to change someone's beliefs or behavior. I feel morally obligated to speak up on behalf of myself, someone else, or "what's right."

VIRTUE SIGNALING

I want to prove that I'm on the right side and thinking/acting in the right way for the approval of other participants, the facilitator, or an imagined spectator.



Why Silence?

REASONS WE CHOOSE NOT TO TALK

SUPPRESSION ± EXCLUSION

- Nobody asked me.
- They didn't ask me in a way that I am capable of responding.
- I don't feel welcome here.
- My beliefs/opinions/experiences don't seem like they would be welcome here.
- It's pretty clear I am the only one like me in this conversation.

PROTEST ± RESISTANCE

- I refuse to be a representative for everyone in my identity group.
- As someone from my identity group, I don't think I should rightfully have a voice in this conversation.
- I remain silent to make a point.
- The questions asked of me are tokenizing, objectifying, or condescending.

TRAUMA

- I have past trauma that is being triggered by the materials and topic of this conversation, people's comments, or others' behavior.
- I feel shocked or stunned into silence and unable to find words at the moment.
- I am actively experiencing violence in this moment.

FEAR

- I don't feel safe from violence or oppression in this space.
- I'm afraid of others' judgment.
- I don't know the right words to use.
- I know what I want to say will be criticized or unpopular.
- Speaking in front of people I don't know well makes me very anxious.

REFLECTION ± PROCESSING

- I need more time to think.
- I'm not sure how I feel about this yet.
- I'm still digesting what we were reading or discussing earlier.
- I am organizing my thoughts and crafting what I want to say.
- I'm taking notes, drawing, or meditating to focus on following the conversation.

LISTENING ± OBSERVATION

- I'm attuned to others' thoughts right now, not my own.
- I'm deeply interested in the group dynamic unfolding in this conversation.
- I'm intensely absorbed in what someone else is saying.
- I have nothing that I want or feel compelled to add.

VALUES, CULTURE, PERSONALITY, ABILITY

- I believe that silence is valuable and important. I practice it deliberately.
- In my culture, we tend to speak less, respond slower, and listen/reflect more.
- I am a still and quiet person by nature, and I don't talk much. It's just who I am.
- I'm nonverbal or have trouble producing speech in the way others in this space do.

DISTRACTION, DISCOMFORT, DISENGAGEMENT

- I'm thinking about other things I have going on right now.
- I didn't prepare for this conversation.
- I'm not interested in this topic.
- This conversation feels too high level or too low level for me.
- I slept poorly last night or my body doesn't feel comfortable right now.