

Shadow Magicians (MIT): Language Lab

Best Practices for Speaking in Circle

Purpose: To promote clarity and awareness by discouraging unconscious tactics for putting distance between me and my emotions.

Language Guidelines:

- Use “I” statements (“I” hand signal for reminding)
- “And”, not “but”
- Me-too signal (hand up)
- Limit feelings (emotions) to Anger, Sadness, Joy, Fear and Shame
- Distinguish feelings from thoughts & judgments
 - “I feel like”... usually means “I think that” or “I judge that”.
- Avoid adverbs of probability, frequency, or degree (perhaps, maybe, sometimes, etc.)
 - “I’m not a little mad... I’m mad!”
- Avoid negatives: Don’t say what it isn’t; say what it IS
 - “it wasn’t good” → “it was bad!”
- Use open-ended questions: (questions that start with *what*, *how*, etc?)
 - Avoid closed ended or leading questions, which limit possible answers, reduce likelihood of emotional impact, and often indicate an agenda on the part of the person asking the question
- Avoid using the shaming words of “why” and “should”