



# The Momentum of Silence

## 沉默的力量

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Have you ever tried remaining silent or minimized your speech throughout a single day? It is almost impossible to give silence a try and be courteous at the same time; but even in such circumstances we can confine our speech to transactional language.

The Buddha and teachers across the spectrum of religious traditions have all extolled the virtues or disciplining our words. In addition to silence, the avoidance of gossip, harsh speech, chatter, slander, backbiting and, of course, lying are all adverse to “right speech,” one of the members of the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

It is said that we are “language beings” and that language is fundamental to being human. Not only do we use language to communicate with others, but language is how we communicate with ourselves, how we reason, analyze, and think about things. Given the importance of language to our lives, what is the point of practicing silence? The question of “why” can be answered by examining our inner thoughts, and our use of language throughout our day. If we introspect and ask ourselves how much of what goes on in our mind is necessary, and reflect upon the economy of our spoken words too, we will naturally talk less.

The power of words becomes increasingly clear when we use fewer of them. A good exercise is to resolve at the beginning of our day to keep a rough count of the words used, when and why they were used, and the biggest gaps we cleaved where silence reigned. The object of the exercise isn't to speak less, but to avoid unnecessary talk. We must

您是否試過在一天之中保持沉默或寡語？在保持沉默的同時又不失禮儀，幾乎是辦不到的。即便在這樣的情況下，我們仍然可以把談話範圍限制在主要訊息交流上。

佛陀和各個宗教傳統的導師一致讚揚語言的功德和約束語言的重要性。除了保持沉默，要避免兩舌、惡口、嘮叨、誹謗、背後中傷以及說謊，這些有違八正道之一的正語。

有人說，我們是「語言的動物」，語言是人類的基本要件。我們不僅使用語言與他人交流，也使用語言與自己交流，進行推理、分析和思考。既然語言對我們的生活如此重要，那麼練習沉默的意義何在？藉由檢視我們的內在思想和我們使用語言的方式，可以答覆這個問題。如果我們自省、自問內心中有多少念頭是必要的，衡量我們開口說話的價值，自然會減少開口。

文字越精簡，力道就越強。一個不錯的練習方式是在一天的開始就決心進行粗略計算今天使用的文字數、開口的時間和原因，以及讓我們打破沉默的主要原因。這項練習的目的不是少說話，而是避免不必要的閒談。我



be courteous to others and effective in what we do, so we don't want to appear to others contrived. Yet, we do want our language to be disciplined and not drift apart from our intention.

The same that goes for communicating with others goes for inner dialogue with ourselves. The effort should be to allow the mind to be still and avoid business. Business tires the mind, preventing it from hopping from one subject to another never staying on any thought for any length of time, while seemingly entertaining, will leave us spent at the end of the day.

Economical use of language will conserve our energy and sense of who we are. A sense of inner strength and self-worth increases through guarded speech and reduced inner dialogue. We will notice that as the duration between talk increases, momentum is created that we enjoy and want to keep going. When we do speak with intention, we will have greater clarity, and our thinking will be able to stay on topic when necessary as our capacity to be silent increases. In other words, silence makes the mind more serviceable.

One helpful practice to reduce unwanted conversation is to avoid speaking unless spoken to. Whenever it is practical this simple exercise will dramatically reduce the amount of words spent. We initiate unnecessary talk more often than we may be aware of. It also helps to walk with eyes slightly downcast so as to not invite casual talk.

們必須待人有禮並且做事有效率，而不是讓人感覺自己很矯作。我們希望文字使用受到約束，而不要讓它遠離了我們的初衷。

與他人的溝通是如此，與自己的內心對話也是如此。應該努力讓心沉澱下來，而非不停地打轉。忙碌會讓我們的心疲憊，應該避免在不同主題之間跳躍，卻不花足夠時間在任何問題上思考。跳躍性思考看起來似乎很有趣，但最終只會讓我們在一天結束時覺得疲憊。

節制地使用語言可以保持我們的精力和自我意識。通過謹言和減少內心對話，可以增強我們的內在力量和自我價值。當說話的間隔時間延長，我們會產生動力想要繼續保持。當我們有意識的開口，我們的思路會更清晰；我們的思維也更能夠專注在一個主題上。換句話說，沉默讓頭腦更能發揮。

減少不必要的交談的一種有效做法就是止語，除非有人跟你說話。只要在可行的時候進行，這個簡單的練習就會大大讓你減少說話。由我們自己發起那些不必要的談話次數可能遠比我們意識到的更多。另外，走路時眼光稍微朝下，也可以避免閒談。

我把這些寫下來是因為有一天，我突然意識到自己一整天都沒跟任何人說話，只給女兒發了簡訊，沒有打電話或是發電子郵件。這樣安靜的一天對我來說並不陌生，但今天讓我

I wrote these words at the end of a day when it occurred to me that I spoke to no one throughout the day; I only messaged my daughter, no phone calls, or emails. Such silent days are not unfamiliar to me, but today was one that impressed upon me more than others the power silence has to open the mind and the sense that contentment increases as unnecessary words decrease.

We all tend to talk too much and think too much and even fear, not doing so. Silence is scary and unfamiliar and takes some time getting familiar with. Though we tend to like to muse and entertain ourselves with thought, still, silence is the greatest show on earth. In our communication with others, too, it will be found that if we are economical with our words and less talkative, others will be more inclined to listen to what we have to say and value our friendship.

Most of the time, we are not even aware of the noise in our minds because we are in it. When we practice silence, we will realize just how torturous the mind's ramblings are, and we will naturally cease being complicit in supporting it. Silence should not feel imposed like a law, but like something we want to do. It only takes a little practice to get the momentum going, but once we get started, it will carry us along with little effort on our part. It may even be a little bit like a fun game that we play with ourselves. Often, I will go for hours not speaking and find myself drawn unwittingly into a conversation, only realizing afterward it could have been avoided.

“Silence is Golden” is not said without reason, and it is for each individual to prove for herself. ❀

印象特別深刻。沉默的力量可以打開心扉，減少不必要的話語，讓心靈的富足感增加。

我們很容易說太多、想太多，甚至如果不這麼做會覺得害怕。沉默是可怕而陌生的，需要一些時間來適應。儘管我們喜歡沉浸在念頭中自得其樂，但沉默依然是世界上最偉大的表演。在我們與他人的交流中也會發現，如果我們節制語言的使用並且少說話，他人將會在我們說話的時候更專心傾聽，也會珍視彼此的友誼。

大多數的時候，我們甚至沒有意識到自己內心的「噪音」，因為我們身處其中。當我們練習沉默，我們才會意識到那些妄念是多折磨人，自然不會再與之同謀。沉默不該像法律一樣強加於人，而是讓我們想做的事。只需稍加練習就能產生動力前進，一旦開始做了，動力將帶領我們持續下去。練習沉默有點像我們跟自己玩一個有趣的遊戲。通常，我會連續幾個小時不說話，卻發現自己不知不覺地加入對話，後來才意識到這些都是可以避免的。

「沉默是金」這句話不是沒有道理的，要靠每個人自己去證明。❀



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