

# How to Find Your Voice, Speak Your Truth, & Listen Deeply

These skills will benefit you and your entire organization.

Reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

**Say What You Mean.** By Oren Jay Sofer. Softcover. 286 pages. Shambala Publications, shambhala.com.

Communication in Western society tends to be task-oriented, even in relationship-oriented contexts such as nonprofit organizations. In *Say What You Mean*, Oren Jay Sofer describes how to be more aware of our thoughts, perceptions, and emotions in order to balance task and relationship types of communication. By being thoughtful about how we express ourselves, we can develop less polarizing communication and accomplish more.

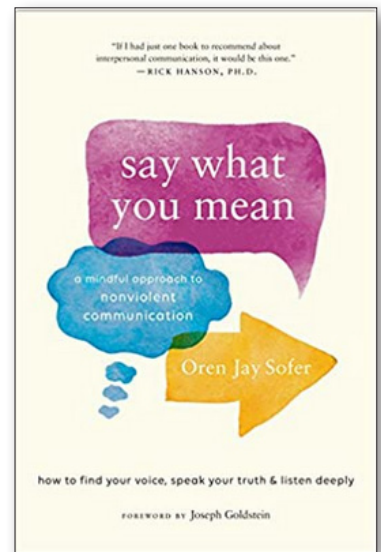
Sofer suggests techniques he learned from Eastern studies to help us become more relational. Relational attitudes toward communication create more understanding, something that will benefit nonprofits in achieving goals together.

Communication is often used to exploit fear, driving us toward polarization, hatred, and violence. But it can also be inclusive, bringing us together and preventing violence of all forms. Such inclusive communication doesn't just happen. It's something we need to learn. It takes mindfulness and practice.

This book provides communication methods we can use to meet the needs of our organizations, our stakeholders, and ourselves. Using the principles offered here, we can change our communication approach to one of mutuality and understanding.

Perhaps the book's only limitation is that it restricts itself to one-on-one situations, omitting the group communications so common to nonprofits. Its great strength is the way it encourages us to consider communication in a holistic way. As a result, we're likely to take a closer look at the way we communicate and make changes for the better. **S**

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## Be Mindful about How You Speak, How You Listen, & How You Respond

Unconscious patterns of communication can create misunderstandings. The result can be hostility and even violence, as Oren Jay Sofer warns in *Say What You Mean*. He offers helpful advice for making your conversations more intentional, thus uniting rather than separating you from others:

- **Avoid words** that exaggerate or interpret, such as always, never, ever, whenever.
- **Make “I” rather than “you” statements.** For example, say, “When I hear . . . , I feel . . .” rather than “When you say . . . , you make me feel . . .”
- **When giving feedback, be specific** about what is and isn't working and why. Rather than just saying “Thank you,” describe what the person did that you liked and why you liked it.

As you work to improve your communications, practice using these phrases:

- **“Can we sit down together** and look at what we both need, and see how to work this out?”
- **“Here’s what** I hear you saying. . . . Do I have that right?”
- **“Tell me** more.”
- **“Anything else** you’d like me to understand about this?”
- **“Yes,** that’s important. Can we finish talking about this first and come back to that in a moment?”
- **“What’s leading you** to say no? Do you have other ideas?”
- **“Could we explore** some other options that might work?”
- **“I’d like some time** to take that in. Could we pause for a moment?”