

 Episode #74



Practicing Our Communication Skills:

MINDFULNESS

with
Anne Muhlethaler

<https://talkabouttalk.com/73-mindfulness-with-anne-muhlethaler>

Mindfulness can elevate our communication skills. Learn how to be mindful in specific communication contexts by pausing, communicating with intention, and acknowledging our inner critic. Anne Muhlethaler (yogi, meditation teacher, podcaster and luxury brand consultant) shares her experiences and valuable insights.

CONTENTS

- Summary
- Resources
- Andrea's Introduction
- Interview Transcript
- Andrea's Conclusion



SUMMARY: PRACTICING MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

- Mindfulness is maintaining **a form of awareness**, moment-by-moment, of our thoughts, our feelings, our physical sensations, and the surrounding environment. Mindfulness differs from awareness in that it includes a quality of **kindness**.
- **Mindfulness Meditation** is the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.
- Mindfulness practices can be **formal** (seated, standing, walking or lying down) or **informal**.
- The four pillars of mindfulness:
 1. Mindfulness of **breath** - focus on elongating the out breath
 2. Mindfulness of **body** - our body is our gateway for experiencing life. Consider your “body suit” that you use to navigate this world
 3. Mindfulness of **thoughts and emotions**
 4. Mindfulness of **the constructs of the mind**

“Consider your **intention** before you send an email or have a conversation... Most of the time we’re in a place of reactivity and we forget, what’s the underlying intention of what we’re doing? To be honest with you, I have to practice this every day... and I’m pretty chilled compared to most people.”

Anne V. Muhlethaler
yoga & mindfulness teacher,
podcaster, luxury brand consultant



BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

*“We don't meditate to become good at breathing or meditating.
We meditate to get better at life.”*

- The benefits of mindfulness include stress management, decreased anxiety, improved sleep quality, and decreased onset of disease and chronic pain.
- Mindfulness can improve our communication. Mindfulness can help us be less reactive. It teaches us to pause. When we pause, we are better communicators.

3 WAYS TO BE MINDFUL:

1. **Pause.** Take a time out. Be less reactive.
2. **Focus on intention.** Ask yourself, “what is my purpose here?”
3. **Acknowledge your inner critic.** Be kind and compassionate with yourself. Try not to be judgmental. Rather than silencing your inner critic, recognize it. What’s it pointing out to you? Is it fake news? Is it helpful? Say to yourself: I hear you, thank you for pointing this out to me, and then move on.

“Our inner critic keeps us safe.
And keeping us safe often
keeps us small. So that’s one of the
reasons why examining the content
of our thoughts and becoming
friendly with our **inner critic** is such an
important and worthwhile experiment.”

Anne V. Muhlethaler
yoga & mindfulness teacher,
podcaster, luxury brand consultant



3 STRATEGIES FOR BEING MINDFUL IN SPECIFIC CONTEXTS:

1. **Undivided attention:** When you’re in a meeting and your mind's wandering, give your whole attention to the person who's speaking. Cultivate a state of presence, physically and mentally, without judging, without commentary.
2. **The “2 feet, 1 breath” framework:** When you’ve lost focus, think “2 feet 1 breath.” Sit or stand straight, uncross your arms and feet. Feet planted firmly on the ground. Then focus on one foot at a time. Then your breath. Then you’ll feel grounded.
3. **S.T.O.P. when you feel out of control:**
 - S - Stop and put things down for a minute.
 - T - Take a few deep breaths. The goal is to make the out breath slower.
 - O – Observe. Inquire. What thoughts that are going through your mind?
 - P – Proceed. Get back to the person in front of you.

RESOURCES

Anne Muhlethaler

- [Out of the Clouds](#) podcast,
- [AVM Consulting](#)
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/anne-muhlethaler-a1323010/>
- Instagram: [@annvi](#)
- Recommendations:
 - [“Deep Work”](#) by Cal Newport
 - [“Being Well”](#) by Rick and Forrest Hanson
 - [“Design Matters”](#) by Debbie Millman



PRACTICING Our Communication Skills Episodes

- #73 “Practicing with V.R. Technology” with Robson Beaudry: <https://www.talkabouttalk.com/73-practice-with-robson-beaudry/>
- #72 “What is Practice” with Dr. Nadine Kelly, YogiMD: <https://www.talkabouttalk.com/72-practice-with-nadine-kelly/>

Talk About Talk & Dr. Andrea Wojnicki

- Website - <https://talkabouttalk.com>
- Podcast – <https://talkabouttalk.com/podcasts>
- Email - Andrea@TalkAboutTalk.com
- Free Weekly Newsletter - <https://talkabouttalk.com/blog/#newsletter-signup>
- [Book Andrea](#) for a free 20min “communication skills training” consult
- Andrea on LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andreawojnicki/>



ANDREA'S INTRODUCTION

Well hello and welcome to Talk About Talk. I'm your communication coach, Dr. Andrea Wojnicki (please call me Andrea!).

Whether you're an ambitious executive, looking to catapult your career by improving your communication skills, or maybe you simply have a strong growth mindset – you're always looking to learn and improve your communication skills, or perhaps both? Well, you're in the right place.

At Talk About Talk, we focus on communication-skills-topics like personal branding, confidence and networking. If you check out the TalkAboutTalk.com website, you'll find online corporate training, 1-on-1 coaching with me, online courses, the free weekly communication-skills newsletter, and, of course, the archive of this bi-weekly podcast. You can choose what works for you !

Welcome to Talk About Talk episode number 74! This is the 3rd of 3 episodes where we're focusing on PRACTICING our communication skills. And I have to tell you that this mini-series exceeded my expectations. I can't wait for you to hear this.

In [episode #72, I interviewed my friend Dr. Nadine Kelly](#), host of the YogiMD podcast. She's the ideal person to talk to about practicing. She's a retired doctor, a yoga instructor, a podcaster, and a drummer, amongst other things. So Nadine thinks a lot about practicing, and she shares her wise insights with us about what it means to practice.

In the most recent episode #73, I interviewed Robson Beaudry, the amazing tech entrepreneur who shared some of his incredible ideas about how technology can be used to practice our communication skills. After that conversation, I must admit, I felt much more optimistic about our future.

In this final episode on practicing, you'll meet a new friend of mine named Anne Muhlethaler. You'll learn the definition of mindfulness, the benefits of mindfulness, and importantly, HOW to be mindful, whether you're in a heated discussion or perhaps you're in a boring online meeting and you know you need to re-engage. You'll also hear Anne's take on how fashion mogul Christian Louboutin leverages mindfulness and intentionality to fuel his success.

Alright let's get into this. Let me introduce Anne to you now and we'll get right into the interview. Then I'll summarize at the end. You don't need to take notes, because I did that for you. Just keep doing whatever you're doing – driving or walking or housework, or whatever. I'll simplify and summarize everything for you at the end, and you can always access the episode shownotes on the talkabouttalk.com website.

Anne Muhlethaler is the epitome of a modern Swiss renaissance woman. She's a luxury brand consultant, a meditation and mindfulness instructor, a podcaster, and she's on a mission to make you better at living. Her practical approach to meditation and breath work is grounded in science and strengthened by her extensive knowledge of the pressures of corporate life.

Anne worked for Christian Louboutin, first in the UK as general manager, then in the US and France where she spearheaded global communications at for over a decade, overseeing all channels including public relations, social media, content creation, retail marketing and events, as well as wholesale collaboration programs and partnerships.

Nowadays, Anne leads AVM Consulting, a branding and communication consultancy that provides bespoke communication and business development strategies for fashion and luxury brands worldwide.

But wait there's more. Anne's also a qualified 200-hours Hatha Vinyasa yoga teacher and certified Mindfulness Meditation teacher. Her accessible and practical tools are designed to improve participants' capacity to work, move, think and thrive.

AND, she's the founder of Out of the Clouds, a podcast where she teaches, explores and discusses the crossroads between business and mindfulness. I have to say, Anne also a beautiful voice, as you'll hear in a moment. It's perfect for podcasting - and for singing, which yes, of course, she also does. She truly is a renaissance woman!

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Dr. Andrea Wojnicki: Thank you very much, and for joining us here today to talk about mindful communication.

Anne Muhlethaler: I'm so excited to be here.

AW: Let's get into this. What is mindfulness?

AM: Mindfulness is a term that's over-used. And I feel like a lot of people are confused about it. So let's break it down. Mindfulness essentially means maintaining a form of awareness, moment-by-moment, of our thoughts, our feelings, our physical sensations, and the surrounding environment. But the difference that it has with awareness, for example, is that mindfulness has a quality of kindness or nurturing lens, if you wish. One of the best definitions of mindfulness meditation was coined by [Jon Kabat-Zinn](#). He is the founder of **MBSR, which is called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program**. And he comes from a big family of scientists, he was at MIT before he got introduced to mindfulness and meditation. So his definition always stands well against two people who, who need clarity on this...

AW: like myself.

AM: Yeah, but this is particularly to the meditation part. So he says, and every word is important in this. **Mindfulness Meditation is the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.** And I think that what most people do not understand is the on purpose part. You can be self-aware and not be self-aware on purpose. Of course, we're assuming that you're being self-aware in the moment. And the piece that I think took me a lot longer to learn is the non-judgmentally. And these four key parts really, altogether, sum up what mindfulness meditation is. Now, just to make it clear, for everybody who is listening to us, **there are two sort of basic pillars of mindfulness if you wish, in terms of practices. There are the non-formal practices, and there are the formal practices. So formal practice is seated, standing, walking, or lying down meditation, all four types are equally as valid as the other.** So for example, when I teach groups and I can see someone's very fidgety, I encourage them not to be doing the meditation seated, but to stand,. And then the **informal mindfulness practices is to cultivate this state of moment by moment awareness, but doing everyday tasks.** My favorite teacher for this is Thích Nhất Hạnh, who's a really famous Buddhist, virtual thinker, and activist, and he teaches you to pay attention to eating. So mindful eating, mindful walking, and he has really delightful examples of practicing mindfulness, when you're washing the dishes, listen to the sound of the water, smell the smells in the kitchen, really tap into all of your senses. Feel the water on your hands. And you really, this is one of the ways that you can feel yourself being present rather than just necessarily being in your mind and your thoughts.

AW: What I have two thoughts about that. So one is it it just sounds idyllic? Right? It's almost like okay, how you feel? Yeah, I guess. Yeah, feeling the water. It just sounds like a sensual. And I don't mean sexual. I mean, like, through the senses, you're really, really aware of your sense of touch, and the temperature and the flow of the water, for example, as it comes out of the tap, and over your hands. The other thing is, you were listing some of those contexts for me was, I hear people talking about being aware of those contexts, when they're diagnosed with a mortal illness, right? Like when they realize they've got a month to live, and then suddenly, they want to, and then they do feel the rain on their face when they go outside?

AM: Yes, yes, absolutely. We are all I would say, in **our natural state, reactive as human beings as animals, with our old limbic brain.** And so mindfulness invites us not to live in the limbic brain, not to solely be in our minds in our thoughts. And yes, you're right. One of the keys for me, the one thing that I keep on pulling out is that connection through the body and the senses, which I think is misunderstood in most types of meditations that are not transcendental per se. So I know that for me for my personal experience in the 40 or so years that I've spent on this planet, a large part of my life, I wasn't particularly connected to my body. And **our body is, first and foremost, the gateway to experiencing this life.**

AW: Yeah, I love that. That's a great quote.

Thank you. Yeah, but it is through our senses. And it is largely through our bodies that we experience the world around us. Not solely, but it is the major source of this experience. My teacher calls this the **body suit, the space suit that we use to get around.**

AW: Very cool, very cool.

AM: So the body piece for me is very important. And you're right, that is an element of we can really anchor ourselves in our senses to feel present, it is one of the easiest ways into the present moment.

AW: Okay, so before we get into being mindful with our communication, can you share with us what the benefits are of mindfulness?

AM: there's the obvious stuff. So I also come from a family with a lot of scientists and doctors. And I love the studies that have been published in the past 20 or 30 years, because there's a lot of them around **less stress. So stress, decrease, better sleep, low anxiety levels, and more serious diseases. Obviously, chronic back pain, chronic pain,** in general, is something that can be really very much decreased through the mbsr program, amongst others. I heard that surpasses **IBS**. So in terms of the overall health benefits, they are numerous, they are incredibly well researched, and I think it still feels to me like it's early days in terms of in terms of the research, because each type of practice offers, I guess, a different types of benefits. So I mentioned the broader definitions of mindfulness. But I should say that **the pillars in terms of the formal practices of meditation, so the four pillars are mindfulness of breath, mindfulness of body, mindfulness of thoughts and emotions, and then what's called Mindfulness of the constructs of the mind.** And so these are the types of meditations that I teach in various class formats, that all feed into each other so that we become more intimate and more aware with the sensations in and around our body. With the breath, the breath is key. And it took me years to figure that out. And then the content of our thoughts and emotions, and the stories that are constructed in our minds around those.

AW: Okay, so the fourth pillar that you mentioned there, the constructs of the mind, that's really stories?

AM: yes.

AW: Okay, now you're speaking my language. But back to the first pillar, I keep hearing over and over and over again, in all sorts of contexts, of course, in terms of our health and kind of medical benefits, but just in terms of communication, breathing really is king. If you're not leveraging breathing, for example, you're getting up on stage, just thinking first about your breath. You know, it has such a huge impact on how you feel, and then also on how you're perceived.

AM: Well, I'd reverse that actually, it's almost like, if you check what your breath is like, it will tell you about your state. So I would like to encourage everyone and I'm reminding myself of that, too, that **the breath is the language of the nervous system. If you can't inhale, if you have trouble exhaling if you feel that your breath pattern is not normal, it's a sign of disruption.** And one of the great reasons to adopt mindfulness practices is essentially Well, this is I'm going to tell you a story from my teacher, [Annie Carpenter](#), who's an amazing yoga teacher. She's an avid birdwatcher, like she's obsessed with birds. And there's a very similar practice in bird watching and watching our breath. She was saying that she was taught by this very, let's say seasoned Birdman. And we call them who said, who said, what you want to do is you want to find a spot and you want to come at the same time every day. It doesn't matter whether you watch five minutes or 20 minutes or an hour. The idea is you want to establish an understanding of the baseline. What is the normal state and in coming back over and over

again, you'll then pick up if something has happened, you know, if a bird of prey has arrived or any other disruption in the natural environment, and I think that one of the reasons why it is so helpful and so fascinating, even if you only manage for five minutes a day, is when you get a sense of the baseline, you're going to get a better sense of when you're not feeling okay. And then the next step is the inquiry about what's not okay about the situation. Right? That's the beauty. And the real juicy part about mindfulness is we don't, I love this quote, **We don't meditate to become good at breathing or good at meditating. we meditate to get better at life.**

AW: Oh, that's beautiful. I love that.

AM: Isn't it good? I mean, when the first time I heard it, I was like, Oh, yeah, of course, we knew that. But that is just eloquent. It's perfect. I may have butchered the quote, but yeah, you get the, you get the benefit of it,

AW: I definitely get the benefit of it. Okay. So in your [Out of the Clouds podcast](#), you say that your topic is at the crossroads between mindfulness and business. So my question is, how can the listeners adopt this mindfulness in their business or at work?

AM: So I was reflecting the other day, because I was graduating from this two year course, our teacher invited us at the end to say, if you had only one last opportunity to teach, if you were to teach only one more time, what would you talk about?

AW: Wow.

AM: I know, I was not ready for that. And I think that's what I would say, it's the same about business or about life. First, I would cultivate loving kindness or self-kindness, which is one of the compassion practices that you get taught alongside mindfulness of the body. Because first, we need to be kind to ourselves, it's not just enough to be aware of the content of our thoughts, it's also important for us to be kind to ourselves, a lot of us most of us have difficult inner dialogue, particularly around work around performance.

AW: And this is amplified in an environment where hard work and busy-ness is celebrated, right?

AM: 100%. Yeah. So the **first piece that I would say is incredibly important for everyone is to first to look after your inner dialogue, self-kindness, and self-compassion.** It's almost like this principle of we need to put our oxygen mask on first, right? You cannot look after others well, if you're not looking after yourself first. And so for me, I think it's the most essential. Now more specifically, when we are at work, the biggest thing is to **learn to pause.** So when we establish a baseline, and we notice some things going wrong, we need to pause we need to stop. One of the difficulties is that **the more stressed we are, the more reactive we become.** And so essentially, the biggest gift we can give ourselves is when we find ourselves to be reactive, when we find ourselves not being our best selves, or showing up in our best light is to take a break, go to the loo, sorry, go to the toilet. Anything that you can do to just remove yourself and just take a breath.

AW: Right, right.

AM: I think that one of the biggest things that we can learn to do is to step away, when you find yourself in reactive mode, when you see that there's a big trigger, that's happened, give yourself from five minutes to 24 hours until you choose to respond. So you need to be able to brush it off. Before you can engage.

AW: Yeah, absolutely. These stress triggers, if that's what you want to call them, are not just affecting our mind, they're affecting our whole body.

AM: Yes.

AW: And then that impacts what we end up communicating and sending back out in the world. And we don't want to be on autopilot when that happens.

AM: Absolutely. So I would say the third piece of advice I would have to say for business or work, it's **remembering our intention**. Sometimes we can be a bit petty, or we do something we don't even know why maybe it's actually because we're hungry or thirsty or tired. And it has nothing to do with the person in front of us. So I would encourage everyone to actually write this like write intention on a poster and stick that in the center of your computer screen, or put it on the mirror in your bathroom. And a few times a day, remember your actual intention before you send an email before you have a conversation. Because I think most of the time again, because we are used to being in a place of reactivity, we forget what is the underlying intention of What it is that we're doing? To be honest with you, I have to practice this every day, several times a day to make it feel like it's taking a dent in my reactivity. And I'm pretty chilled compared to most people.

AW: Yeah. Wow. So my brain is exploding right now.

AM: Well, let's take a pause.

AW: I haven't used the term intention. But I have been talking about this. and dare I say, preaching this in a variety of communication contexts. So for example, small talk, maybe you're at a networking conference, and you're meeting people for the first time and you're feeling awkward. One of the tactics that I encourage people to do is to take a step back, think strategically about what your purpose is. In other words, as you would say, what's your intention here?

AM: Andrea, you're encouraging them to be mindful!

AW: Exactly.

AM: Taking a step back is a metaphor for pausing.

AW: Right. And more recently, I've been coaching people on how to prepare to be more productive in meetings, whether you're leading or participating, a meeting, and whether it's in real life or in a boardroom table, or whether it's online. And one of the things that I encourage people to do is at the top of your meeting agenda, write down what your personal objective is for the meeting. In other words, put your intention for participating in this meeting. Right?

AM: Absolutely. Hmm. That's exactly what it is.

AW: So **we've got kindness, we've got pausing. And we've got focusing on intention**. Do you have any other frameworks or other ways that we can just remind ourselves to be more mindful?

AM: Yeah, of course. So these are again, considered more informal sides of mindfulness. So intention would be a first. But the second one, there's a great acronym that really spells it out, **when you find yourself to be in that place where something's wrong, the acronym is STOP. So S is for stop and put things down for a minute**. Whether you take a break, leave the room, go to your balcony, if that's where I can do my home, or you go around the block, just put things down and step away.

Talk About Talk™ Shownotes

AW: Okay.

AM: Then **T stands for Take a few deep breaths**, as I was saying before, the breath is the language of the nervous system. So taking what is often called square breath, four counts in four counts out is a great way to calm yourself, if you can take a few deep cycles of breath. For people who aren't particularly anxious, like really, you're triggered by something bigger, I can even recommend, **the goal is to make the out breath slower**. So let's say that you breathe in for two or three or four, you breathe out for six, seven or eight, a period of time. **The O stands for observe, this is the inquiry moment, observe, what are the thoughts that are going through your mind?** What are the emotions and what is going on through your body?

AW: So it's internal observation.

AM: Exactly.

AW: Okay.

AM: And then hoping that by then you have found some levels of steadiness. **P stands for precede, so you get back to the person in front of you. This is not a tactic to deal with trauma, this is more of a day to day framework**. There's another one, which is even more simple. And you can try to put this in your calendar so you can practice it every day. It's called **"2 feet 1 breath."** And essentially, it does the same job of anchoring us into the present moment. So if you want to close your eyes and try it with me,

AW: sure!

AM: So I'm going to ask you first to feel into your left foot and start pressing into the floor, pressing into the floor and maybe wiggle your toes and feel your foot around, whatever is covering it. And now I'm going to ask you to feel into the right foot, maybe you wiggle it around, and then you push down and get a sense of the steadiness under the surface. And really set then take a deep breath in. And a deep breath out. It's a grounding practice to just make us feel more in the present moment. How did that feel?

AW: I feel so chill now. I really do.

AM: I'm wearing really comfy socks. So that was a nice experience for me too.

AW: I'm gonna go put on some more comfy socks after this. Wow. Yeah, so. Wow. So let's talk about mindfulness in other communication contexts. So for example, if you're in a meeting, something that may be relevant for a lot of listeners say you're in a really boring zoom meeting and you know that you got to pay attention. Do you have any ideas or recommendations for how people can successfully become more mindful, or I guess, reap the benefits of becoming more mindful in this boring online meeting context?

AM: Sure, essentially, I would recommend to try and **give your whole attention to the person who's speaking. And what I mean by that is, try to cultivate this state of presence, without judging, without commentary**. And without engaging in what possible response you're going to bring. But really try to simply take in what the other person is saying.

AW: So as you were describing that, I was thinking of the word absorbing, so you're really absorbing the verbal communication and the nonverbal communication? And really, that's listening. Right?

AM: Oh, absolutely.

Talk About Talk™ Shownotes

AW: It's harder than we give it credit for. I mean, listening is, I call it a superpower, it is probably the superpower of communication. Before we move on to something else, I just want to go back to this word, **non-judgmental**, you said before. It's one of the hardest things and as you're describing it now, for me, I'm realizing that's got to be one of the most challenging parts of being mindful. Do you have any advice on how we can be less judgmental?

AM: Yeah. And starting to have a practice of mindfulness of thought and emotions, you first need to become a little bit more intimate with the content of your own thoughts. Well, a lot of us don't want to do it, because it's a bit scary in there sometimes. And I think it's important to be aware, because you'll end up being able to group thoughts together, you'll be like, Oh, yeah, that's planning mind. Or, oh, that's judgment, judgment mind. And you'll see that there are some areas and all thoughts come back. I think **it's important to be aware of your internal critic, your inner critic, in order to be able to not as the silence said, but I think the best advice I've heard, the important thing about the inner critic is to recognize that generally, it's there to point out something. So maybe it's afraid that you're going to fail, or it's the voice of different things that could be in your life on your past. And I think that one of the ways to stop being judgmental, is to stay say to yourself, thank you, I hear you, I don't feel this business you helpful right now. But thank you for pointing this out to me.**

AW: So one way to think about it is that you don't want to judge the judger

AM: Exactly. And more to the point, you don't want to resist, because we've all heard it, **what resists persists. And so the more you yell at it, the less likely it is to go away. It could also just be your thought, I don't know if you've ever heard this, but not all of our thoughts are worthwhile. And some of them are fake news. Some of them are just thoughts. So you want to be aware of the content and decide for yourself, whether it's just a passing thought, or whether it's got energy to it. And then going towards that negative energy, instead of resisting it, looking at it and acknowledging it almost as if it was a part of your brain, like, you know, scared on or anxious on is rearing up her head because she wants to protect me from failure. So in order to do that, she's going to try and keep me from doing certain things because they're scary, or they're exposing or they're vulnerable. And so **in a lot of the things that we do that are not the norm, where we extend ourselves, when we want to change things, our inner critic is going to be very vocal, because essentially back a few millennia, or before that change meant potential death. So I think it's a, you know, it's an ancient mechanism to keep us safe. And keeping us safe often keeps us small. So that's one of the reasons why examining the content of our thoughts and becoming friendly with our inner critic is such an important and worthwhile experiment.****

AW: I am so glad that I asked you that question. That helps me immensely. So I'd love to shift gears just for a minute before we get to the five rapid fire questions. And I just wanted to point out to the listeners, in case it's not obvious to them just from listening to you, that you are a Modern Renaissance woman. And I mentioned this to you when we were offline. But you've got your meditation and your mindfulness practice, your yoga, your singing, your digital marketing, and you also have a career in luxury branding, which to me is just so fascinating. And I'm wondering, is there a link between luxury brands and mindfulness?

AM: I think there is. The brand that I worked out for 17 years is Christian Louboutin, the, you know, red soled king of shoes.

AW: Yeah.

AM: I think that Christian was always, for me an example of intentionality, at least, towards what he wanted for his company, his teams, his interactions with people, his interactions with his fans, the consistency with which he talked about everything that touched his work, there was always an incredibly clear intention around everything. He always wanted women's legs to look amazing. So if you ever come to him and complain that you're not comfortable in his shoes, I think he'll sleep well at night saying **yes, but I made I made your legs look great.** So there was a great sense of integrity, about his purpose, I would say there's a more recognizable sense of purpose and integrity with a number of the luxury brands that I worked closely with, I discovered, not the luxury brands that universally know or see in a big mall. But I worked with a lot of beautiful, amazing small businesses that really work at the top of luxury, but are not necessarily very well known. And these also have a very strong sense of what they stand for. And I think that I see this as a form of mindfulness, if you can remember to treat your clients and your vendors and your staff the same way.

AW: I didn't think that this is where this this question was going to go. But I have to say, I'm thrilled because lately I've been obsessing on the topic of personal branding, when you were describing the Christian Louboutin, his vision for his firm, as you said, not the brand, but his firm, and the consistency and clarity through which he communicated the integrity of his intentions, right with all of his stakeholders, so that it was recognizable. This is branding, right? This is personal branding. And then these tokens, i.e. the shoes that he's creating, in manufacturing, become part of other people's personal brand, and they signal the integrity and the quality.

AM: Absolutely. He was obsessive about it.

AW: Wow, that is so cool. What an incredible experience. It sounds like you had working for him. But I have to say, I bet you're not everybody who was in your shoes, would have been self-aware enough to understand and to perceive that his personal brand was permeating your values. I mean, that's that's a pretty heavy layer of self-awareness, I think.

AM: Well, that's very, very good point you're making. So here's the thing, I was exposed to him a lot. But also I was his PR for many years. That means I was with him in interviews. And sometimes it was a week of interviews in you know, Dubai, or in Tokyo and Hong Kong, then Shanghai. So, but I want to just add one more story that I think is a huge link to mindfulness for me. Years ago, I had this theory that Christian had a stronger inner voice than other people. I said this out loud to people. And as it turns out, I realized it's not that he had a stronger inner voice. He just listened to it more. And I think this is something that we can all benefit from being mindful of your own body's reactions, when you're not sure about a choice that you want to make. Reading the signals when our minds are clouded. Oftentimes, our bodies can give us a clue as to whether to make left or right or say yes or no.

AW: Yeah, they say the body doesn't lie.

AM: Yes, absolutely true.

AW: Okay, let's move on to the five rapid fire questions. Are you ready?

AM: Yes.

AW: First question. What are your pet peeves?

AM: I don't like mess. I like a really clean, harmonious, balanced environment. And it's really funny because if when I was younger, I figured that if I would ever get a tattoo, it would be the word harmony. At the time. It's because I was a singer and I love harmonies, vocal harmonies. Turns out I actually just like harmonies as a whole and I hate a messy environment.

AW: Oh, that may answer the second question, which is, what type of learner are you? Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or some other kind of learner?

AM: I think of a mix because I want to say that I'm a really big auditory learner. I feel like I retain information so well through sound. But I need my environment to be clean as much as you know clean as possible to be neat or it's not a freak or an obsessive thing at all. It's more that it's like a disturbance at the back of my nervous system. And I won't retain as much if I don't feel like the environment is relatively balanced. Does that make sense?

AW: That makes a lot of sense. And I think I'm with you on that. Question number three, introvert or extrovert?

AM: Haha. "Social introvert." That confuses a lot of people.

AW: Okay, question number four: communication preference for personal conversations?

AM: I text - which when you're in Europe means WhatsApp, mostly WhatsApp and Instagram messaging. One of the things I discovered I really like about texting, particularly around trickier relationships are people that you don't know what to say to you, or they offer this **opportunity to pause** naturally.

AW: Oh, that's true.

AM: It's a mechanism that really works for me.

AW: Okay. Last question. Is there a podcast, a blog or an email newsletter that you find yourself recommending the most lately?

AM: Lately, I've been talking quite a lot about "Deep Work," the podcast by Cal Newport, who also had [a book called Deep Work](#). Another one I really, really like is the ["Being Well" podcast by Rick and Forrest Hanson](#). So Rick Hansen is actually a PhD in neurophysiology, if I'm correct. And he was one of the teachers who guest teachers in my course. And he came to talk to us about neuroplasticity. And I'm a geek, I loved it. The last one is, it's always good, but she's also just like the best interviewer ever. It's Debbie Millman. ["Design Matters" by Debbie Millman](#). I just I think she's amazing.

AW: Okay, well, I will put links to all of those in the show notes. Thank you so much for your time and all of your insights. And I can tell you, I'm really inspired to be more mindful and to approach so many aspects of my life including communication but beyond that with intention. Thank you so much, Anne.

AM: Thank you, it was such a pleasure to talk to you, as always.

ANDREA'S CONCLUSION

Wow. What a great conversation. Thanks so much to Anne Muhlethaler. I loved how at the end, after sharing such keen insight about mindfulness, Anne shared her experiences from when she worked with Christian Louboutin. She highlighted how Christian has an uncommon intentionality and a stronger inner voice than most people AND that his success may be attributable to not only that but to the fact that he listens to his strong inner voice. Incredible. I have to say that Anne revealed her status as a modern renaissance woman right there.

Now, as promised, I'm going to briefly summarize this episode. We covered a lot, didn't we? But I think I can categorize most of the learnings as the definition of Mindfulness, the benefits of mindfulness, and HOW we can be mindful.

Mindfulness DEFINITION

Anne started by saying that mindfulness means maintaining a form of awareness, moment-by-moment, of our thoughts, our feelings, our physical sensations, and the surrounding environment. The difference between mindfulness and awareness, is that mindfulness has a quality of kindness or as she says, a nurturing lens,

Mindfulness Meditation is the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. All of the elements are required there - Mindfulness practices can be non-formal (like when we are in a boring meeting and we suddenly make an effort to re-engage) as well as formal practices, which can be seated, standing, walking, or lying down meditations.

The four pillars of mindfulness are mindfulness of breath, mindfulness of body, mindfulness of thoughts and emotions, and mindfulness of the constructs of the mind.

When it comes to the first element here, mindfulness of breath, you can think of the breath is the language of the nervous system. I love that.

And for mindfulness of body, I also loved what Anne said: our body is, first and foremost, our gateway to experiencing this life. And if it helps, we can think of our body as a suit, a body suit, like a space suit that we use to get around.

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

The most important point to keep in mind here is that we don't meditate to become good at breathing or good at meditating. we meditate to get better at life.

But what are the benefits of mindfulness? Start with stress management. There's also improved sleep, lower anxiety levels, and decreased onset of disease. Not to mention decreased chronic pain.

Beyond the mental and biological benefits of mindfulness, there's also improved communication. (Oh yah! That's why we're here, right?) well, mindfulness can help us become less reactive. It teaches us to pause. And when we pause, we are better communicators.

That reminds me of Anne's point about the benefit of texting: We can pause when we text. That's so true!

HOW TO BE MINDFUL

Anne was very prescriptive here about the significance of our inner dialogue. Paying attention to our self-talk. Show up with kindness, and compassion. Be aware of your inner critic. Don't silence it, necessarily, but recognize it. What is it pointing out to you? It might be unnecessary, it might even be categorically false, like fake news, but it also might be your subconscious identifying something. Try not to be judgmental, Just say to yourself: thank you, I hear you...

SO we can be mindful by being kind to ourselves, by acknowledging our inner critical and then moving on. There's also pausing, as I just mentioned. Being less reactive. And there's also focusing on intention. I've spoken about this in other episodes in terms of asking yourself "what is my purpose here? What is my goal?"

Anne shared 3 frameworks for HOW to be more mindful in various contexts that I just want to quickly remind you about:

4. The first is when you're in a meeting and your mind's wandering. You know what I'm talking about. When you catch yourself daydreaming. Anne suggests giving your whole attention to the person who's speaking. Cultivate a state of presence, physically and mentally, without judging, without commentary.
5. The 2nd tactic, the "2 feet 1 breath" framework, can help you with this. I tried it – it really works. So when you've lost focus, think "2 feet 1 breath." Sit or stand straight, uncross your arms and feet. Feet planted firmly on the ground. Then focus on one foot at a time. Then your breath. And when you get through that. You'll feel grounded.
6. Last, Anne suggests that when we feel out of control, think of the acronym STOP:
 - S is for stop and put things down for a minute.
 - T stands for Take a few deep breaths, (the goal is to make the out breath slower),
 - O stands for observe, this is the inquiry moment, observe, what are the thoughts that are going through your mind?
 - P stands for precede, so you get back to the person in front of you.

Now, I leave you with this last thought from Anne:

"in a lot of the things that we do that are not the norm, where we extend ourselves, when we want to change things, our inner critic is going to be very vocal, because essentially back a few millennia... change meant potential death. So our inner critic keeps us safe. And keeping us safe often keeps us small. So

Talk About Talk™ Shownotes

that's one of the reasons why examining the content of our thoughts and becoming friendly with our inner critic is such an important and worthwhile experiment."

We don't want to live small, do we?

Thanks again to Anne for such an amazing conversation. You can learn more from Anne if you check out her OUT OF THE CLOUDS podcast.

That's it! I hope you enjoyed these three back-to-back episodes focused on PRACTICING our communication skills. First there was WHAT IS PRACTICE with Dr Nadine Kelly, then practicing with VR technology with Robson Beaudry, and of course this episode.

You can find links to these episodes as well as the shownotes with the summaries and transcripts on the talkabouttalk.com website.

While you're there, I really hope you'll sign up for the Talk About Talk newsletter, if you're not already! This is your chance to get free communication skills coaching from me every week in a simple to digest email. I promise no spam and no more than one per week. Just go to talkabouttalk.com to sign up or email me directly and I'll add you to the list. You can email me anytime at Andrea@TalkAboutTalk.com.

THANKS for READING – and Talk soon!

- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andreawojnicki/>
- Web: <https://talkabouttalk.com/>
- Email: Andrea@TalkAboutTalk.com



***When referencing resources and products, TalkAboutTalk sometimes uses affiliate links. These links don't impose any extra cost on you, and they help support the free content provided by Talk About Talk.