



# Why Speech? REASONS WE CHOOSE TO TALK

## 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.