

The Soft Road

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TWO WORDS

Sometimes the simplest of lessons have the greatest effect. This is one such lesson – in language and communication – that I learned a few years ago, and whilst I don't always remember to apply it, everything changes when I do.

How many times have you had a conversation that was moving along easily with an exchange of ideas, that shifted in an instant from a sense of sharing, to feelings of tension and opposition. What happened? And what could we do differently?

We can start by observing how almost all of us have the habit of speaking in declarations. Notice how we tend to share our opinions this way, as statements of fact, as though the shorter and more definitive, the better.

Here are some innocuous examples:

Salted caramel ice cream, it's the best. The water is too cold for swimming. That music is too loud. Ted Lasso is the only thing worth watching on TV. It's a miserable day. Spring is the best season...

Declarations are by their nature divisive. You either agree with me or you don't. And when the subject is ice cream, TV, the volume of the music or the weather, we may not escalate to an argument or conflict. But we might!

Swap out these examples and put in something stronger. Politics, religion, money, important decisions, lifestyle choices, public figures, family: apply the same conviction and declarative style and we are lighting a firework! In response, hackles can rise, defensive stances are taken, or we close down and withdraw.

These interactions are often based on people genuinely wishing to express themselves. And they are happening everywhere, everyday — anywhere two or more people “gather”.

Whatever the situation, the addition of two words – For Me – changes everything. It's that simple. When we begin with “For me...” immediately we take ownership, making the statement about us, our experience, our view, our preference—instead of relaying a statement of fact or pressing a righteous opinion.

Try it out. Pick something you feel clearly about and preface the statement “For me...” See how differently it feels to speak this way. Likely it will be softer, less strident, more inclusive and inviting of another view, yet not weak. You may feel clearer and more grounded.

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For me, that music is too loud.
For me, the water is too cold for swimming.
For me, that doesn't make sense.

It's part of our human nature, this desire to be heard. Adding these two words can foster receptivity; they do not emphasize me, or my opinions, over you. Rather, they offer an expansive invitation for all of us to be ourselves. And for me, that makes all the difference.

Melanie Kirkbride is an exceptional coach and master teacher of Vedic meditation who works with people to empower them to unlock their potential and thrive. [Email us](#) to enquire about Melanie's services, and to receive her Teachings.