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★ Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication

Oren Jay Sofer
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Words can hurt, and they can heal. We need only look around us these days to see how the words we use, and the ways we use them, can create or destroy individuals, families, communities, even nations. In these chaotic times, Oren Jay Sofer's wise and sensitive guide to mindful, nonviolent communication is a balm for the soul.

A student of Marshall B. Rosenberg and a longtime meditator, Sofer has identified three steps to effective communication: lead with presence, which keeps us grounded and aware of the choices we have in how we relate to others; come from curiosity and care, which offers the conditions needed for understanding and collaboration; and focus on what matters, which facilitates each person's ability to identify what is or isn't important to the outcome of a conversation. He describes a good conversation as a dance made up of three basic positions: speaking, listening, and resting in presence. When these flow well, conversations develop a rhythm that brings the human nervous system into harmony.

For those who find the dance of conversation awkward, especially in high-stress moments, Sofer provides ways to deescalate the tension with sample phrases that introduce topics and intentions, keeping the dialogue focused and flowing smoothly and meeting the needs of both parties. Just imagine: instead of rabid tweets capable of destabilizing nations, what if world leaders could come together to ask, "Could we sit down and look at what we both need, to see if we can find a way to work this out?"

Detailed, thorough, and practical, *Say What You Mean* shines light on the ability of good communication to bring more compassion, kindness, and wisdom to our relationships. "What we say matters," writes Sofer, who sees words as a kind of magic with the power to change our world.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November/December 2018)

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