

Reflective Listening Buddies Practice

January 14, 2026

The privileged environment is the cornerstone of our Practice. These guidelines and program requirements are intended to assist us all in maintaining the privileged environment.

Program Elements

- The duration of the program is three months.
- You are assigned one buddy for the quarter
- You commit to one call per week for 30 minutes.
- Support calls are offered each quarter. Support calls are an opportunity to look at your process around practicing reflective listening and to clarify any questions you have about the program. Commit to attending at least one support call per quarter.

Program Logistics

Scheduling Calls

- Use email for scheduling or logistical details.
- Please email your buddy within one week of receiving your buddy assignment to arrange a call time.
- The process for determining who will place the first call is included in the buddy assignment email.
- The program supports Google Voice and Signal and FaceTime Audio. If you have indicated a preference for Internet calling, you will be paired with a buddy who can use at least one of these platforms. Please indicate which platform you will be using when you contact your buddy to arrange a call time.
- To minimize communication, please schedule your calls for the same time each week.
- Conduct all calls in the privileged environment which means we keep custody of the attention. This includes holding calls at a time and in a quiet place conducive to giving the call your undivided attention.

Call Structure

- Each call will be 30 minutes and divided into two 15-minute sessions.
- Buddies alternate placing the call each week.
- The buddy placing the call speaks first.
- The person reflecting monitors the time and lets their buddy know when time is up. The encouragement is to use a timer that is audible to both buddies.
- Switch roles for the second 15-minute session. The person who spoke first now reflects.

- If the speaker stops before their time is up, maintain silence until the 15-minute session ends.

Beginning the Call, Ending the Call, and Switching Roles

- The participant who is first to reflect, answers the phone by saying “This is _____ (states their name)”
- Participant who places the call says, “This is _____ (and states their name)”
- When it’s time to switch roles, the new reflector sets the timer and states, “I’m ready to listen” or “I’m ready to listen and reflect.”
- The call is ended by both buddies saying “Gasshō” and hanging up.

During the Call

- Refrain from chit-chat or conversation unrelated to practicing reflective listening as outlined in these guidelines.
- Conduct calls in a place where you will not easily be overheard.
- Do not record any calls or portion of a call.
- If at any time you feel the privileged environment has been compromised, end the call by saying something along the lines of, *“At this point, I’d like to end the call and ask for guidance from the program before continuing.”* Some ways the privileged environment can be compromised: commenting on what is said rather than practicing reflective listening, trying to initiate another form of relationship, asking personal questions, or anything else that isn’t in keeping with the privileged environment.

Missed Calls

- An important component of the program is the commitment to show up for the calls. Keeping this commitment not only assists us in our own practice, but supports our buddy as well.
- If a call is missed, either buddy can send a brief email acknowledging the missed call. Include just the information needed to get back on track such as when the next call will take place and who will be placing the call. There is no need to include any explanations or additional information. Something along these lines often works well: *“I want to acknowledge that we missed our call today and confirm that our next call will be on _____ at _____, and it is my/your turn to place the call.”*
- If you are placing a call, and it is 5 or more minutes past the scheduled call time, the guidance is not to place the call and count it as a missed call.
- If you are receiving a call, and it is 5 or more minutes past the scheduled call time, the guidance is not to answer the call and count it as a missed call.

- Due to potential technical issues with calls going through, if your buddy does not pick up and it is within 5 minutes of the scheduled time of the call it is fine to wait a few moments, then place the call a second time.
- Do not reschedule a missed or forgotten call and resume the schedule the following week. If my buddy was scheduled to place the call that was missed, then I would place the call the following week and vice-versa.
- If a call starts late, but less than 5-minutes late, each buddy still retains their full 15 minutes to speak.
- If it's your turn to place the call, and the buddy calls instead, don't answer. Wait a few minutes and call back.

When unable to keep a scheduled call

- If you cannot make your regularly scheduled call please reschedule by email.
- If a call needs to be cancelled, please notify your buddy via email at least 24-hours in advance if possible. A canceled call counts as a missed call.
- If you will be unavailable for 3 or more consecutive calls during the course of the quarter, email your facilitator so a substitute buddy can fill in during your absence.
- If you feel that you are not getting the full benefit of the program because of a pattern of missed or cancelled calls, please email your facilitator.

Communication

- Use email for scheduling or logistical details.
- Do not communicate with your partner about anything other than scheduling calls, acknowledging a missed call or confirming when the next call will take place. All other questions can be brought to a support call or emailed to your facilitator.
- If issues arise regarding your buddy, please email your facilitator.
- If you have difficulty connecting with your buddy, either at the beginning of the quarter or throughout the quarter, please email your facilitator sooner rather than later—timely communication enhances the program for all.
- Do not contact your buddy outside of the program structure or after the quarter has ended.

Reflective Listening Guidelines

When Reflecting

- Practice pure reflective listening by simply reflecting back what your buddy said using their words as best you can. Do not draw out or clarify.

- Use the second person pronoun in your reflection. For example, if your partner says: “*I have a hard time getting past resistance to meditating*,” your reflection would be “*You have a hard time getting past resistance to meditating*.”
- Please avoid:
 - summarizing or paraphrasing
 - asking questions
 - offering solutions, advice or reassurance
 - identifying/empathizing with your partner’s experience
 - commenting on what your buddy said
- If your buddy does not pause at intervals to give you an opportunity to reflect fully, the encouragement is to interrupt your buddy. You could say something like, “*May I jump in here and reflect that back to you?*”
- You can also reflect back just the last 2 or 3 sentences or words and then return to offering full reflections as the session continues. This is not a substitute for full reflection.

When Speaking

- It is helpful to pause at intervals to give your buddy the best opportunity to reflect you fully.
- Avoid commenting on or referring to your buddy’s process. For example, refrain from saying anything like: “*I could really relate to what you were saying earlier....*” Or, “*I could feel a reaction to what you said about...*”
- Avoid using profanity on the calls.
- While you can choose to explore any content or process on your RLB call, the encouragement is to not talk about what arises for you in your practice of reflective listening during your call. Instead, bring what you see about your practice of reflective listening to a support call.

Only One Rule

In this practice we have many guidelines and only one rule: We will use everything in our experience to see how we cause ourselves to suffer so we can drop that and end suffering.