

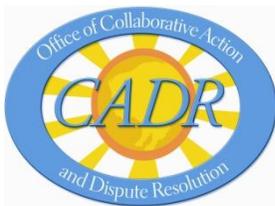


# Getting to the **CORE** of *Communications*

*We cannot teach people anything;  
We can only help them discover it within themselves.*

Galileo Galilei

**U.S. Department of Interior**  
**Office of Collaborative Action**  
**And Dispute Resolution**  
**2010**



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# Agenda

- 00:00 Part I: Introduction**
- Welcome
  - Why We're Here
- 00:15 Part II: Recognize - Understanding Challenging Conversations**
- Understanding Challenging Conversations
  - Practice: Analysis & Strategy Exercise
- 01:00 Part III: Respond - Communication Skills**
- Responding with Respect
  - Creating a Safe Space
  - Two Parts to Effective Communication
    - Listening to Understand
      - Ask Open-ended Questions
      - Paraphrase
    - Speaking to be Understood
      - Reframe
      - AND, Share Your Perspective
      - "I" Statements
      - Feedback Sandwich
- 02:00 Break**
- 02:15 Part III: Respond - Communication Skills – continued**
- Practice Exercise
- 02:45 Part IV: Resolve – Challenging Conversations Process**
- Challenging Conversations Process
  - Practice: Role Play Exercise
- 03:45 Part V: Reflect**
- Learning
  - Closing Activity
  - Evaluation
- 04:00 Adjourn**

## Course Designers: CHI

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**CHI** Carole Houk International LLC, founded in 2002 by Carole Houk, principal, is a full service conflict management consulting firm based in the U.S., specializing in the Medical Ombudsman/Mediator program, organizational conflict management systems design, and conflict resolution skills training and advisory services. CHI provides its clients with quality conflict management services that assist individuals, groups, and organizations in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Carole and her associates provide value to their clients through customized approaches and personalized attention.

**Carole Houk, JD, LLM** is a consultant, trainer, facilitator, attorney, and conflict management systems designer based in Washington, DC. Carole was the first Counsel for the U.S. Department of the Navy's ADR Program from 1997 through February 2001, and had all programmatic responsibility for designing and managing a comprehensive ADR program covering the Navy's environmental, contractual, tort, and workplace disputes. As ADR Counsel, she worked with the top decision-makers in the Navy to use ADR processes for all types of disputes, from sensitive environmental negotiations with multiple litigants to convening a mediation in the largest government contracts claim to date, the \$2.1 billion A-12 Avenger litigation with former Secretary of State Warren Christopher as chief mediator.

Carole specializes in the design of conflict management systems. She designed a successful model for the early resolution of medical malpractice disputes for healthcare organizations, currently deployed at dozens of medical centers around the country. A mediator, facilitator, author and ombudsperson, Carole co-chaired the Organizational Conflict Management Section of the Association for Conflict Resolution.

**Nike Carstarphen, Ph.D.**, is an independent consultant and co-founder of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT), a non-profit organization dedicated to expanding the knowledge and practice of conflict transformation and peacebuilding through education, training, research, evaluation and practice worldwide. Dr. Carstarphen specializes in conflict assessment, organizational development, collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution systems design, and program monitoring and evaluation for public, private, community and nongovernmental organizations at the local, state, federal and international levels.

Nike has provided training and training-of-trainers for over 3,000 adults and youth from the U.S., and abroad. She has helped design conflict prevention programs for schools, communities and organizations, and facilitated several short- and long-term inter-group dialogues and problem-solving processes in organizations and communities. Her highly successful facilitated dialogue between police officers and gang-involved youth was featured in a special publication, *Bridging the Police-Gang Divide*, by the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Policing Consortium. Dr. Carstarphen has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in the U.S., Bolivia, Indonesia, and Spain, and has published book chapters and articles in *Negotiation Journal*, among others.

## ***Getting to the CORE of Communications:*** **Course Description and Objectives**

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The Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR) is offering a half-day experiential communications skills course that will enhance participants' ability to communicate more effectively by providing strategies for engaging in and conducting challenging conversations. This training builds on the introductory ***Getting to the CORE of Conflict*** training that CADR developed to implement CORE PLUS, DOI's Integrated Conflict Management System.

Participants will hone their skills in effectively communicating and handling challenging conversations within the organization and with external parties in a way that is consistent with the Department's commitment to implementing an integrated workplace conflict management system, and aligning with and supporting the Department's mission to protect America's natural resources and heritage, honor its cultures and tribal communities, and supply the energy to power its future.

### **Course Objectives**

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Participants will:

- be better able to surface dissent, raise concerns, and respond with respect,
- increase their ability to have difficult and meaningful conversations before situations escalate, when emotions can be understood, and when they can be at their best, and
- increase their ability to demonstrate active listening skills, work through issues and tensions as they arise, constructively give and receive feedback, and ultimately improve their conversations about performance management, conduct and discipline issues, diversity, ethics, strategic planning, policy issues, team building, mentoring, interpersonal relationships, and expectations and accountability.

## Getting to the CORE of Communications & The 4 Rs

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### Recognize

- *Understanding What Makes Communication Challenging*

### Respond

- *Communications Skills for Collaboration*

### Resolve

- *Challenging Conversations Process*

### Reflect

- *Learning from Experience and Challenges*

*To improve is to change;  
To be perfect is to change often.*  
- Winston Churchill

# Recognize: *Understanding What Makes Communication Challenging*

*Intuition will tell the thinking mind where to look next.*

- Jonas Salk



# What Makes Communication Challenging?

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- Different Opinions
- Uncomfortable Topics
- Difficult Behaviors
- Strong Emotions
- Stakes are High



What makes a conversation challenging for you?

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Why do people behave in challenging ways?

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How do you contribute to making conversations challenging?

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What strategies do you use or can you use to overcome these challenges in order to turn challenging conversations into successful ones?

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## Types of Difficult Behavior

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Regardless of how much you like the organization you work for, there are always people who can be frustrating to work with and make your work more challenging. Don't assume they realize their behavior is disruptive or challenging. Most people don't recognize the impact they are having on others. Do you? In the workplace, everyone must find a way to work together effectively and cooperatively. Therefore, understanding what motivates "difficult people" will help you identify the best strategies to handle difficult people and behaviors.

The following are various types of difficult behavior you might encounter during your career:

- Chatterbox
- Gossip
- Back-stabber
- Complainer
- Negativist
- Bullies
- (Over) Delegator
- Credit Grabber
- Kiss-Up
- Single-Minded
- Loud One
- The Know It All
- Intentionally Disruptive
- I'm Sinking and I'm Taking You With Me

## Levels of Difficult Behavior

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### □ Difficult

- An otherwise friendly person who's behavior can be disruptive to your work or the environment
- Chatterbox, Over Delegators

### □ Challenging

- Chronic behavior that becomes annoying, distracting, and difficult to ignore
- Know-it-alls, Complainers, Negativists

### □ Toxic

- Potential underlying personality issues
- Can be exploitative and threatening
- Bullies, some gossipers



# Tips for Dealing with “Difficult People”

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## Look Deeper

People don't usually come to work to do a bad job or be difficult. Look below the surface at what drives and motivates that person. What needs might their behavior be satisfying?



Don't assume people will be difficult. Reframe your thinking. Perhaps they are just different from you. What can you do to bridge your differences?

## Examine Yourself

Look at yourself. People tend to assume that other people - “they” - are difficult. Are you sure? Could you be overreacting? Has this person pushed one of your “hot buttons”? How have you contributed to making the situation difficult? Why do you behave the way you do? Explore what you're experiencing with a trust friend or colleague (without being a gossip, complainer, etc). Be open to making changes in your behaviors.

## Approach the Person for a Private Discussion

Don't let the situation fester. Ask the person you are having difficulty with for a private discussion. Don't ignore a difficult conversation, regardless of who it's with – your peer, boss, employee.

Use a soft entry. Acknowledge to the other person the conversation may be difficult. Create a positive atmosphere despite being upset or needing to deliver difficult feedback.

Talk about what you are experiencing (using “I” messages) and the impact of their actions on you and your work. If you are their supervisor, talk about the impact they are having on their work and/or other's work. Be respectful. They might not realize the impact they are having. If they are aware, but don't care, continue the discussion as positively as you can to reach the best outcome possible.

Find a way to make it in their best interest to be cooperative. Tell the person the impact that changing his or her behavior will have from a positive perspective. If you are their supervisor, tell the employee how choosing to do nothing will affect their career and job.

## **Be Open, Clear and Consistent**

Encourage open and honest communication. Be clear and consistent. Don't be defensive.



## **Change Your Approach**

You can't make someone change. However, you can change your actions in ways that may promote positive change in other's behavior.

If one approach to communicating and interacting with the other person doesn't work, try a new way. Don't get stuck in the "get a bigger hammer" syndrome.

## **Don't Reward Bad Behavior**

Don't let other people's behavior draw you into behaving badly. An eye for an eye will make you both blind.

Don't frequently cover up for others or routinely fix their problems. Give them the opportunity to grow and develop.

## **Focus on the Goal of the Conversation**

Keep your eyes on the prize. Remember what you want to achieve, what you want changed. Focus on achieving your interests, not winning your positions.

## **Follow Up After the Initial Discussion**

Check in with the other about how things are going. Has the situation improved? Has the behavior changed for the better? Or worse? Determine whether a follow-up conversation is needed or would make a positive impact.

## **Recognize Some Things Can't Be Fixed**

Some people have issues that need to be dealt with that go beyond effective communication and conflict management skills. If you find yourself in this situation, identify ways to mitigate the situation and improve the situation, even if it isn't resolved. Get help if needed. At the same time, don't be too quick to judge a person as beyond "repair."

## Group Process Challenges

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Group settings, such as meetings, can be especially challenging. You (or the facilitator, if there is one) will need to use all the communication skills in your toolbox to keep the group process moving forward. When people challenge the process or substance, don't take it personally. Some people:

### **Just want attention and recognition:**

- Give them attention, acknowledge their concern, and invite their positive participation.
- Ask “What do you think we should do? How could we accomplish that? How can we meet your concern?”

### **Want a specific outcome and think the way to get it is to fight:**

- Offer them a more constructive way than fighting. Invite them to join the process.
- Use some constructive questions to stop the attack and invite more positive participation.
- Ask, “Can you slow down? I want to make sure I understand what you're saying. How do you want this recorded?”
- Ask, “Has your approach to dealing with this issue helped you achieve your goals?”
- Remind them, “This is an opportunity to try a different way to discuss these issues and deal with this problem.”

### **Don't know how to participate constructively:**

- Model appropriate behavior for them.
- Propose, in private, more constructive behavior.
- Help them find a specific role they can play.

### **Feel lost and don't know what's happening:**

- Help educate them to understand the process and become good participants.
- Help people feel included.

### **Think they are being helpful:**

- These people are your allies. Acknowledge their attempt to help. Help them become better participants.

From Institute for Conflict Analysis & Resolution, *Small Group Facilitation: The Art, Science and Myth of Helping People Work Together*.

## Dealing with Group Meeting Challenges

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The following are some challenges that may affect the level of trust and comfort of group members and some possible responses. What other challenges and responses might there be?

### **Problem: Some participants don't say anything.**

There are several reasons why someone may not be speaking: they are shy and need to be coaxed or invited to speak; they are upset, angry, frustrated, confused, etc. and are reluctant to speak; they have a longer "pause" time than other participants and are waiting for an opportunity to speak without feeling they are interrupting others; they are still trying to get comfortable with the group and will begin to participate later. And, finally, they may be there to listen and may not intend to participate orally.

#### Possible Responses:

- Try to draw out quiet participants without putting them on the spot:
  - Make eye contact with them.
  - Look for nonverbal cues to see if they want to speak.
  - Gently remind the group that it's important to hear from everyone.

### **Problem: One or two people dominate the discussion.**

#### Possible Responses:

- Acknowledge the person's contribution and energy for the topic. Then ask others in the group for their views or how they might respond to what has been said.
- Speak with that person before the next discussion or during a break to remind them to give others more time to speak.
- As a last resort, gently remind people of the norm to share air-time and note again that you hope to hear from all members of the group. An outgrowth of this could be a discussion with the group about appropriate participation.

**Problem: Lack of focus, not moving forward, participants wander off the topic.**

Possible Responses:

- First, recognize that you may not understand the relationship between what is being discussed and what you understood the agenda of the group to be – but the group may see the linkage very well.
- Only intervene if you feel some group members are getting frustrated, resentful, or bored. After all, the discussion belongs to the group members. You must give some flexibility to participants who want to explore other related topics, but check in with participants to make sure everyone is okay with the direction of the discussion.
- Give them an opportunity to reconsider their agenda and/or goals.
- If you need to refocus the discussion, perhaps ask, “How does your point relate to \_\_\_\_\_?” or “That’s an interesting point, but it sounds like the group would prefer to return to the central issue.”
- Use the “Parking Lot” to capture the gist of the side-discussion and reassure the people who wanted to talk about it that the group can return to it later.

**Problem: Misinformation and/or disputed facts.**

Someone puts forth misinformation which you believe to be false. Or, participants get stuck in a dispute about facts but no one present knows the answer.

Possible Responses:

- Note that there appears to be a disagreement over the facts and ask if anyone has definitive information about it.
- If no one knows the facts, and the point is not essential, put it aside and move on.
- If the point is central to the discussion, encourage members to look up the information before the next meeting.
- Remind the group that experts often disagree, there may be many interpretations of the same information, and there may be no generally-accepted answer.

**Problem: Lack of interest and participation.**

The group seems bored, there's no energy, no one wants to talk, only a few people are participating.

Possible Responses:

- Check out with the group whether the topic under discussion is one that's important to the group as a whole.
- Do a summary of the discussion you've heard to that point to check out whether there is actually agreement in the room (sometimes people are in agreement and don't realize it; sometimes they are just beating a dead horse).
- If people in the room know that others who are not represented would have strong opposing views, ask them to share those views with the group.
- If you believe people have lost sight of the critical issues, raise again what you have heard to be sure the group isn't just too tired to focus.
- If the group is just worn out, take a break, or shift to an exercise that gets people out of their chairs and interacting in a different way (small group work, writing on individual note pads and then posting ideas, energizer activities, etc.).

**Problem: Tension or open conflict in the group.**

Possible Responses:

- If there is tension, address it directly. Remind participants that exploring disagreements is often what the dialogue is all about. Explain that, for conflict to be productive, it must be focused on the issue: it is acceptable to challenge someone's ideas, but it is not acceptable to attack someone personally.
- Acknowledge people for caring deeply about the issues and for being able to express their views respectfully.
- Model good communication skills.
- Be careful not to shut down disagreement or people's freedom to express themselves strongly.
- Slow down the conversation, summarize what participants are saying, and ask for additional explanation as appropriate.
- Make sure that the summaries allow everyone to feel heard and understood. If you think people are missing important elements

because of the tension, make sure your summaries are clear and concise and probe for additional information from people to clarify any doubts you think may linger in the minds of other participants.

- Follow the emotions in the group and ask questions to get at the underlying beliefs, values, feelings and unmet needs that lead to tension, frustration, and anger.

Adapted from Study Circles Resource Center, *A Guide to Training Study Circles Leaders*

# Respond with Respect: *Communication Skills for Collaboration*

*One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears –  
by listening to them.*  
- Dean Rusk



## Communication Techniques

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When conflict is being managed effectively, people feel as if they are being heard, and therefore they listen to what the other person is saying. Conflict ineffectively managed results in one person feeling as if they are not being heard, and therefore, they can't or won't listen to the other person. Using the following techniques helps to break an ineffective pattern of communication.

1. Demonstrate interest, verbally and non-verbally.
2. Avoid communication-stopping statements.
3. Ask interest-based questions.
4. Learn to be comfortable with silence.
5. Express thoughts and feelings in ways that will have the greatest chance of being understood and accepted.
6. Ask people to share their reaction to what is being said by you and others.
7. Reframe and redirect negative communication behaviors, such as insults and verbal attacks, using "I messages" and other techniques.
8. Resist the urge to "figure out" the situation or solution too early.
9. Realize that there are always two, three, four or more ways of experiencing the same reality.
10. Take notes, to help you remember major points.
11. Eliminate as many distractions as possible (e.g., ringing telephones).
12. Clarify commitments necessary to make any agreement work, including process commitments.

## Resist Using Communication Stoppers

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<i>Telling the other person what to do:</i>	"You must..." "You ought to..."
<i>Threatening with an implied "or else":</i>	"You had better... and if you don't..."
<i>Judging the other person negatively:</i>	"You're not thinking straight." "You're wrong." "You're being unreasonable."
<i>Giving insincere praise:</i>	"You are an intelligent person." "You have so much potential."
<i>Psychoanalyzing the other person:</i>	"You have problems with authority."
<i>Giving the third degree:</i>	"Why did you do that?" "Who has influenced you?"
<i>Making light of concerns by kidding:</i>	"Think about the positive side." "You think you've got problems!"

## Make the Conversation Safe

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- **For You**
  - **For Others**
  - **Starting the Conversation**
  - **During Conversation**
- People avoid challenging conversations because they're afraid of what will happen –
    - the other's person's response – will they feel hurt, angry, fearful, etc?
    - the consequences to themselves -- will the person retaliate in some way, withdraw from our relationship; etc?
  - Making people feel safe to engage in risky conversations and keeping the conversation safe even when things get difficult encourages people to engage in difficult conversations and to keep the dialogue going even when things get tough.
  - What makes a conversation feel safe?
    - The perceived **intent** of the communication – is the speaker's intent perceived to be honest and to help or to hurt?
    - When people start feeling unsafe and move to flight or fight, it isn't because of the content; it's because of the intent (perceived or real).
    - If your intent is “pure,” you can talk candidly. If not, you can't. - and it's all about how others perceive your intent (and vice versa).
    - As long as your intent is pure and you make it safe for others, you can talk to anyone about almost anything.
  - What do people base perceived intent on?
    - How people communicate -- aggressively versus assertively; words, tone of voice, body language
    - What people think/feel about you - based on past interactions, expectations, perceptions, stereotypes, etc
  - How do you know when people feel unsafe? What do you do?
    - Watch their body language; listen for changes in their tone of voice; listen for changes in what they say. Are they shutting down and withdrawing?

- What happens when you don't read the signals that others don't feel safe and you just keep going?
  - Chances are, they will flee or fight even more
- What do you do when you think other people feel unsafe?
  - Flight - end conversation, water down your message to make it more palatable? If you do this, will your message get heard and interests be met?
  - Try to make them feel safe again some other way?

## How to Make the Conversation Safe

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### 1. Step Out of the Content

- a. **Stop and rebuild safety before continuing on**

### 2. Rebuild safety - People need to know two things to feel safe:

- a. **You care about their best interests and goals**

- i. You have to persuade people that you have common objectives (or complementary objectives) and want a win/win outcome
- ii. When others think that our purpose is to blame, win, or hide the truth, they are likely to engage in fight or flight (e.g., not dialogue openly/honestly, withdraw, lie/cover up, attack, etc)

- b. **You care about them**

- i. You don't necessarily have to be friends. But, you have to see the humanity in other side - they're human beings and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect

### 3. Step Back In

- a. **Continue the conversation with a renewed sense of trust and purpose**

Adapted from Patterson, Kerry, Grenny, Joseph, McMillan, Ron and Switzler, Al. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY, 2002.

## Disentangling Impact and Intent

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Aware of	Unaware of
My intentions	Other person's intentions
Other person's impact on me	My impact on other person

Use **Contrasting** to fix misunderstandings

Contrasting is a don't/do statement:

**Don't** – explain what you don't intend – this addresses others' conclusions that you don't respect them or have a malicious purpose

**Do** – Explain what you do intend; this confirms your respect or clarifies your real purpose.

Explaining your behavior helps to take away the misunderstanding about your intent

Adapted from Patterson, Kerry, Grenny, Joseph, McMillan, Ron and Switzler, Al. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY, 2002.

## How good a listener are you?

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	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
1. I allow the speaker to express his or her complete thought without interrupting.				
2. When someone is speaking to me, I eliminate distractions by turning off the radio or television, putting aside other work or other things that might interfere.				
3. I lean forward and make eye contact with the speaker.				
4. I listen for the feeling behind the speaker's message.				
5. I paraphrase the speaker's message to ensure I understand what they are saying.				
6. I don't "turn off" the speaker because I don't personally know or like the person speaking.				
7. I express genuine interest in the other individual's conversation with verbal and non-verbal cues.				
8. I ask questions to clarify the speaker's message.				
9. I avoid rehearsing what I want to say while others are talking.				
10. I pay attention to the speaker's energy level, posture, gestures, facial expression, tone and pace of speech as well as their words.				

## Invitation to Dialogue

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DEBATE	DIALOGUE
Assuming there is a right answer and you have it	Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer
Participants attempt to prove The other side wrong	Participants work together toward common understanding
Focuses on WINNING	Focuses on EXPLORING common ground
Listening to find flaws and Make counter-arguments	Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement
Defending own assumptions as truth	Revealing our assumptions for reevaluation
Seeing two sides of an issue	Seeing all sides of an issue
Defending one's own views Against those of others	Admitting that others' thinking can improve one's own thinking
Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others' positions	Searching for strengths and value in others' positions
Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position	Using a consensus-based decision making process

**Michael Roberto, *Why Great Leaders Don't take Yes for an Answer***

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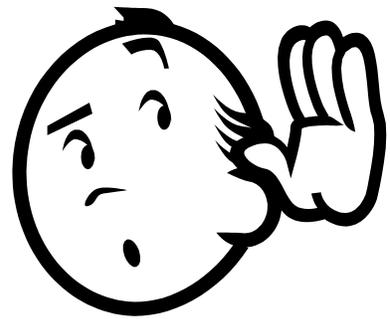
## Two Parts to Effective Communication

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What and how you communicate is also important for making conversations feel safe and for having constructive conversations that encourage dialogue rather than debate.

### Listening to Understand

- How we listen is especially important.
- Listening for the purposes of understanding is key.
- Listening to engage in dialogue, not debate.



### Speaking to be Understood

- Expressing ourselves, our point of view is assertive communication.
- How we express ourselves – the words we use, tone of voice, body language – is especially important to whether or not others will be open to what we have to say.
- Speaking to encourage dialogue, not debate.



## The Importance of Language

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You will often be confronted with situations in which statements are made that contain threads that can be used either to continue conflict or to begin to resolve it. Sometimes, the speaker is angry or upset and doesn't realize the potential impact of his or her words on you, others in the group, or on the group's progress. Sometimes, people are so turned off by the speaker's approach that nothing is taken in at all. And, most often, what other individuals or group members hear is only the part of the statement that continues the conflict.

When someone is facilitating a conversation, one of the tasks of the facilitator is to help everyone feel heard and understood and, to the extent possible, to convey the meaning of what's being said to others. You can use the same skills that facilitators use. After all, you want to be heard and you want other people to feel heard, including the less visible aspect of what is being said. You can also help move people away from stating things in a negative way (and "seeing the glass half empty") by lifting up the positive and helping people focus on how a more positive interpretation of the statement (and "seeing the glass half full") can help your conversation, or a group, move forward more effectively.

The following page highlights some of the tools used by experienced facilitators that you can use too.

# Core Listening Skills

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*“If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear.”*

*-- Mark Twain*

## 1. Be Present

Listening begins by giving your full physical attention to the speaker. Your body language communicates the careful attention you are paying to the person who is talking. This is how you show respect.

- ❑ Make eye contact (if culturally appropriate)
- ❑ Lean slightly forward
- ❑ Face the speaker squarely
- ❑ Open body posture
- ❑ Focus on the speaker

## 2. Track

Communication is like a dance - the speaker is the leader and the listener is the follower. Resist the temptation to take control. Ideally, the speaker should have 80% of the speaking time, and listener, 20%. Allow the speaker plenty of time to complete the message without jumping in to add your own opinions and experiences.

## 3. Encourage

Let the speaker know you are connected and interested:

- ❑ mm-hmm
- ❑ I see
- ❑ And?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ Go on
- ❑ Tell me more
- ❑ And then?

## 4. Acknowledge and Validate

Create a neutral zone to acknowledge and validate the speaker’s point of view. Validation affirms that a person has been heard and has a right to feel or believe whatever he or she feels or believes. Remain objective and do not judge. Keep an open mind. Say *“Yes, and . . .”* or *“Sure, how?”* rather than *“yes, but. . .”* Remember that the goal is to understand, not agree, advise or correct.

## 5. Empathize

Empathy calls upon us to empty our mind and listen to others with our whole being. When we empathize, we demonstrate with respect that we understand what the speaker is experiencing through words and non-verbals. Our goal is to reflect their emotions and their intensity accurately.

- ❑ Listen for feeling words.
- ❑ Observe body language for feeling cues.
- ❑ Ask, "What would I be feeling?"
- ❑ Don't say: "I know just how you feel."
- ❑ Don't say: "I understand."
- ❑ Reflect the degree of emotion.

## 6. Ask Open-ended Questions

Questions help us to open up, generate dialogue, build relationships, and provide information. Asking the right questions in the right way also helps us to uncover interests and explore win-win solutions.

## 7. Summarize

Summarizing can be used in any conversation and is a tool that attempts to capture in concise form what has been said, while providing an overview of what has been said. The goal of the summary is to make sure that the speaker feels heard.

## 8. Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is similar to summarizing. It is a key way we demonstrate that we have understood the speaker and helps the speaker feel heard. It does not require a restatement of every word, rather an overview or outline of what has been said. Importantly, it accurately condenses the **content (facts) and feelings** of what has been stated. It is an opportunity for the speaker to determine whether he or she has been heard and understood. For example, *"These seem to be the main points you have covered so far..." (facts) and: "I hear that you are very troubled about not knowing what to expect...." (feelings)*

## 7. Reframe yourself as well as what others are saying

Reframing what someone has said is a way to use language to validate what is said with the focus on capturing the speaker's underlying interests, needs and concerns and shifts the way "facts" and "feelings" are expressed away from a negative frame of reference to a forward looking positive frame. For example, from *"she never listens to me!"* to *"it's important to you to feel heard."*

## Active Listening Tips

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### “Listening to Understand”

*Goal: To listen and accurately reflect back what you heard in a way that allows the other person to know that you are really listening, and to make sure you heard what they were really saying. This may also help them to become more aware and better understand the problem.*

- Eye contact (if appropriate)
- Face the speaker and lean forward (if appropriate)
- Nod your head to show that you are listening (if appropriate)
- Listen for main points
- Try hard to understand what the other person is saying and how they are feeling
- Ask open-ended questions to gain more information
- Paraphrase content and feelings to show that you are listening and hearing
- Reframe to help everyone focus on what’s possible in and preferred for the future rather than what’s happened in the past

### Do Not:

- Interrupt to tell what you think or give advice (unless asked to share or when having a mutual conversation that has moved from seeking mutual understanding to generating options for solutions)
- Tell about your own experiences (unless asked to share or when having a mutual conversation in which you’re both sharing your thoughts, feelings, etc.)
- Tell about your own feelings (unless asked to share or when having a mutual conversation in which you’re both sharing your thoughts, feelings, etc.)

# Questioning

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Questions help us to open up, generate dialogue, build relationships, provide information, help us to uncover interests and explore win-win solutions....

Closed Ended Questions	Open Ended Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elicit a yes/no or a simple statement of fact</li> <li>• Provide specific data</li> <li>• Often start with “do,” “can,” “will,” or “have”</li> <li>• Help us to clarify information or confirm</li> <li>• Are quick and require little time investment</li> <li>• Can be leading</li> <li>• Can result in misleading assumptions/conclusions</li> <li>• Discourage disclosure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the speaker to share and have a more conversational tone</li> <li>• Often start with the key words “how” or “what”</li> <li>• Requires some thought and consideration to answer</li> <li>• Uncover Interests</li> <li>• Show respect</li> <li>• Help us to clarify information and test assumptions</li> </ul>

Closed	Open
“Do you have any questions?”	“What questions do you have?”
“Can you give me an example?”	“What examples can you give me?”
“Did you tell anyone?”	“Who did you share this with?”

## Examples of Open Ended Questions...

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- What would you like to discuss?
- What is your most pressing issue?
- How would you describe the issue?
- Who else may be affected by the desired result of this dialogue?
- Who else may need to be involved in this discussion?
- What is it that is most important to you about this issue?
- What about this issue seems to concern you most?
- What do you need from me to better understand my concerns?
- What possible options are there here?
- What may be some options that will meet the budget requirements and address the group's interest in improving morale?
- What are the pros and cons for each option?
- What will work from these options for you?
- What do we need to do to put closure on this issue?
- What else?

### And then there are phrases like...

“tell me more...,” “please go on...,” “tell me about..,” “explain...,” “describe..,” “help me to understand...,” that work like open ended questions to encourage dialogue

**CAUTION** Asking “Why?” often puts people on the defensive... use it with **caution**

# Using Questions

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ASK YOURSELF:

*How would I react to the question I am about to ask?*



## 1. CLOSE-ENDED QUESTIONS

*Close-ended questions* usually result in one word or short responses such as "yes" or "no" or "blue" or "Dec. 13." Use these questions infrequently since they often add little and may stifle discussion. They are useful to clarify and identify specific information.

## 2. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

An *open-ended question* cannot be answered with a single word or short phrase. Open-ended questions stimulate thinking, encourage discussion and sharing of information. They often begin with "how," "what," or "why." NOTE: Use 'why' questions with caution... they often promote defensiveness.

## 3. DIGGING DEEPER QUESTIONS

These are variations on the open-ended question. *Digging deeper questions* draw out more information, and help participants to clarify ideas. Digging deeper questions ask to "describe," "tell," or "explain."

## 4. REDIRECTION QUESTIONS

*Redirection questions* are used to hand the discussion to members of the group. "What do the rest of you think about that?"

## 5. FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

*Feedback questions* clarify statements made by individuals and summarize concepts for the group to reflect on or resolve. Asking participants to paraphrase others encourages group ownership of problems.

*"The brain can't refuse a question."*

*Bob Maurer, Author, Teacher and  
Conflict Resolution Practitioner*



## Reframing

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Sometimes the words that one person chooses cause others to become defensive, shut down, or react in other nonproductive ways. An effective communicator is always listening. One of the things she/he is listening for is statements, remarks, or references that may offend others in the room (including you) or interfere with other's ability to hear, respond, or participate in the discussion.

Reframing is the restatement of words or phrases into:

- neutral
- non-judgmental or
- positive terms.

As you read each statement, imagine that you are having a conversation with someone. It is your goal to help the other person engage effectively in a dialogue.

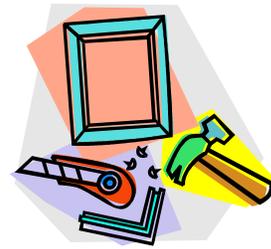
### Example:

Other Person: "I'm just sick and tired of this whole mess. I want it over with right now!"

You: "It sounds like this has been hard for you and you're ready to get this issue resolved as quickly as possible. What do you see as some possible approaches for resolution?"

This is an example in which the listener hears what's been said ("I'm sick and tired") and validates the speaker by acknowledging the underlying emotion (frustration). The listener lets the speaker know s/he recognizes that it's a difficult situation. The potential for positive movement is lifted up in the "you're ready to get this issue resolved" statement. The listener then uses this as an opportunity for probing and drawing out the frustrated person through the use of an open question regarding options or approaches for resolution (unless you need to spend more time on understanding each other's perspectives before moving to possible solutions).

**Metaphor** - Think of the way a dusty painting might and then compare it to how it would look if you took it to store to have it restored, re-matted and reframed. It would be the same picture, but it would look very, very different. That's what's going on here – you're not trying to create a new or different picture, you're simply trying to everyone see the potential for something productive to out of what's being said. You are also modeling effective communication skills that others might learn to use themselves.



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Think of the following as guidance for this process. What you are doing is transforming (reframing) the speaker's words:

**Remember** – these tools are not designed to downplay emotion or to pretend that there's nothing negative in the room but, rather, to help you and the other person or the group see how a seemingly negative, dead-end comment can really be a springboard to move the conversation forward or, at the very least, an opportunity to acknowledge that it's hard when it's not working.

## AVOID

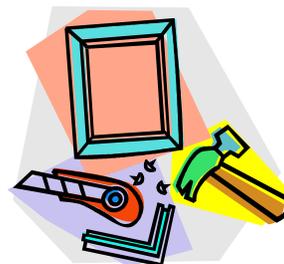


- Agreeing with either side
- Inserting your own opinion
- Including judgments
- Giving advice
- Inserting “but...”

## Reframing - continued

**GOAL:** using language to validate what is said with the focus on capturing the underlying interests or needs and moves from:

- Negative → Positive
- Past → Future, Options
- Other → Speaker
- Positions → Interests
- Blaming → Impact, Concerns
- Complaint → Request
- Negative labels → Positive/Neutral



**Highlights** Feelings, Reactions

**Clarifies** Behavior, Situation

### Examples:

<b>From negative</b> <i>"she's not a team player"</i>	<b>to positive</b> <i>"you would appreciate help from her"</i>
<b>From past</b> <i>"he's always late..."</i>	<b>to future</b> <i>"you would like him to arrive on time..."</i>
<b>From a focus on the other person</b> <i>"you need to stop giving me bad information..."</i>	<b>to a focus on the speaker</b> <i>"It's important to me that the information is accurate..."</i>
<b>From a focus on positions</b> <i>"I don't want to go to a staff meeting at 4pm..."</i>	<b>to a focus on interests</b> <i>"you seem worried that the staff meeting won't end on time, because you have to pick up your children on time"</i>
<b>From blaming</b> <i>"you made me miss the deadline"</i>	<b>to a focus on impact</b> <i>"I felt really stressed when I didn't receive your input for the report on time, because then I got behind and missed the deadline."</i>
<b>From a complaint</b> <i>"you never listens to me"</i>	<b>to a request</b> <i>"it sounds like you would really want to be assured that I'm listening to you"</i>
<b>From negative labels</b> <i>e.g., "stubborn"</i>	<b>to positive (or neutral) attributes</b> <i>e.g. "tenacious"</i>

## Practice Exercises for Reframing

Below are statements that reflect what you might be thinking and would like to say. However, you know that it would be better to reframe your thoughts and feelings to say something more constructive. How would you reframe these statements? What could you say instead that still conveys your thoughts, feelings and underlying interests?

1. You're nothing but a back-stabber. You better stop talking about me. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. You're always focused on what we can't do. You're the most negative person I've ever worked with. You're dragging us all down. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. If you weren't so disorganized, our team would have gotten our work done on time.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I'm trying to do my best! But how can I get all this work done when three different people are telling me what to do! \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. I hate this kind of bickering. If you'd just act reasonably we could solve this mess. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Just because I'm new doesn't mean I don't know anything! \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Can we just focus on the task? I don't have time for all this chit-chat. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Look, I've told you before, you can't wait until the last minute to ask me to do something and expect me to drop everything else and get it done on time for you. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Hey, I came up with that idea in our last meeting. No one ever listens to me! \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Speaking to Be Understood

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Speaking effectively means you're expressing yourself in ways that other's will hear and understand what you have to say (facts, feelings, interests, etc) as you intended.

The goal is to state your concern, opinion, etc without having the other person get defensive and to keep them engaged in dialogue.

## 3 Key Skills

### 1. Reframing your own language

### 2. Yes/And - no Buts!!

### 3. "I" Statements

- taking ownership for how you feel
- focuses on the situation and behavior and their impact on you, rather than pointing fingers at others (focus on the problem, not person)
- shifts discussion on hopes for the future (rather than getting stuck in the past)
- Can be used as "opening statements" to initiate a conversation and invite cooperation and joint problem solving

Example "I" Statement:

- **I feel** (state feeling)
- **When** (describe behavior in specific)
- **Because** (describe impact on your needs)
- **Make a positive behavior request** (describe what you need)

### 4. Feedback Sandwich

- start with a positive
- insert constructive feedback/change you're looking for
- end with a positive

# Guidelines for Effective Communication

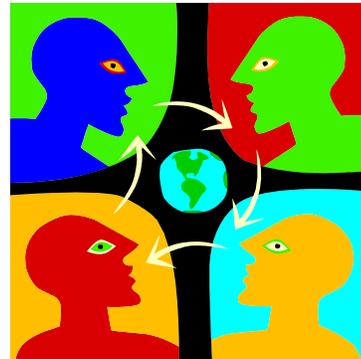
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## Effective Listening

- **Validate** – acknowledge what the other has said, show a sincere effort to understand other; paraphrase
- **Ask, Don't Tell** – ask open-ended questions to show to show you are hearing them and invite them to say more
- **Listen Actively** – be present, track, encourage, empathize, paraphrase, reframe

## Expressing an Issue or Concern

- **Prepare**
- **Share Your Perspective**
  - Share your perspective about the issue
  - State the problem and why it's a problem
  - Talk about the problem, not the person
  - Speak for yourself, not for others
- **Invite Cooperation**
  - “I'd like to solve this in a way that we can both be satisfied.”
  - “How can we fix this?”



## Always

- **Be Authentic**
  - Honest, sincere
- **Be Appropriate**

Be aware of the situation, time, and place

## **RESPECTful Communication Guidelines**

Take **R**esponsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others

Use **E**mpathetic listening – put yourself in their shoes

Be **S**ensitive to different communication styles

**P**onder – think before you speak

**E**xamine your own assumptions and perceptions

Keep **C**onfidentiality

**T**rust that each person is speaking the truth from his or her own perspective

Eric H. F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing but Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy*

# RESOLVE

## *Challenging Conversations Process*

*Communication works for those who work at it.*

-John Powell



## Positions and Interests

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**Interests** are those considerations, goals, and needs that drive peoples' positions. Positions are otherwise known as one person's solution to the issue: "*What I want is...*". Interests are one person's concerns about an issue: "*This is important because....*". Interests are not the same as the positions themselves, for we frequently modify or reevaluate positions, even if our underlying interests remain stable.

**Positions** are pre-determined outcomes, and are revealed through the assertions, demands, and offers you make during the negotiations. They are specific and definite, require justification, and lead to advocacy rather than inquiry.

**Interests** are the reasons for a position, and rather than requiring justification, start the discussion and require explanation. An interest is not an option, position, or proposal.

Determine what is most important regarding the outcome—what you really *need* to have happen, not what you *want* to happen—and communicate and negotiate in a way that is most likely to achieve that outcome. However, never lose sight of the interests of others—the more you attempt to satisfy their interests, the greater the likelihood they will work to satisfy yours.

### Techniques that help promote an interest-based approach:

- Make every effort to understand the *why* behind your position and the other person's position. What are the concerns? What are the needs?
- Ask questions to uncover the other person's interests, such as: "*In what ways is this important to you?*" "*What concerns do you have about this proposal?*"
- Discuss your interests and reasoning before offering your conclusions or proposals.
- Acknowledge the other person's interests and concerns as legitimate.
- Rank your interests by relative importance; see that the other side does the same.

*Positions*, the parties' stand or demands, are just the tip of the iceberg, while the *interests* make up the greater part that lies beneath the surface of the conflict or dispute!



# Challenging Conversations Process

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## Recognize

1. Prepare - Yourself, Others, Time, Place
2. Identify Issue & Invite Cooperation

## Respond

3. Uncover Interests – “Storytelling” (Yours, Theirs)
4. Look for common ground – Both/And

## Resolve

5. Explore Options
6. Seek a win/win

## Reflect

7. Check-in/Follow-up
8. Learn from Experience & Celebrate Success

*People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument.*  
- Will Rogers

## Worksheet “Handling Challenging Conversations”

<b>Step 1: What’s Going On?</b> <i>Share with your partner...</i>	
1. What is the issue/problem? What is the big picture view?	
2. What is the history of your relationship?	
<b>Step 2: It’s All About YOU</b> <i>Share with your partner...</i>	
3. How is this impacting you?	
4. What are YOUR interests?	
5. What is your intent in having this conversation?	
6. What might they do that will be challenging for you emotionally? What are your triggers?	
7. What concerns you about communicating with them?	
8. What can you do to make this safe for you?	
<b>Step 3: It’s All About THEM</b> <i>Share with your partner...</i>	
9. How is this impacting them?	
10. What are THEIR interests? ○ What have they shared? ○ What do you imagine?	
11. What are their main resistance points? ○ What do you know? ○ What do you assume?	
12. What can you do to make this safe for them?	
<b>Step 4: Where You Meet</b> <i>Share with your partner...</i>	
13. What interests and needs do you have in common?	
14. How can you help each other achieve both of your interests/needs?	

# REFLECT

*What have you learned?  
Are you improving?*

*Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.  
- African Proverb*



## Further Reading

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See the Participant Workbook for “Getting to the Core of Conflict: Conflict Management Skills,” for additional reading.

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