



Understanding
Customer
Expectations
Through Better
Listening

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Teachout

Washington State Government Lean
Transformation Conference

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TODAY'S AGENDA

1. Explore customer expectations
2. Practice key listening techniques
3. Make a personal plan

Goal: You think about your customers' expectations and increase your listening skills to uncover them

the main
idea



VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Considerations:

- Are we starting in the right place?
- Are we asking the right questions?

New approach:

- Start with expectations

WHY ASK THAT QUESTION?

Typical: How am I doing?

Instead: What are your expectations?

Why: To hear what's top of mind
To hear all expectations
To keep the focus on them
instead of us

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION JOURNEY

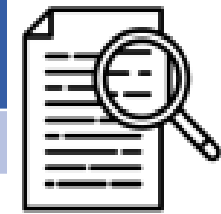
Learn to Listen



Interview Customers about Expectations



Develop Customer Satisfaction Expectations



Interview Customers about Satisfaction



Begin Cycles of Improvement



Mature & Sustain



LEARNING TO LISTEN

- Listening to Understand Workshop Series
- 10 weeks
- 1.5 hour sessions
- Homework

LET'S REFLECT

Listening Habits Self-Assessment

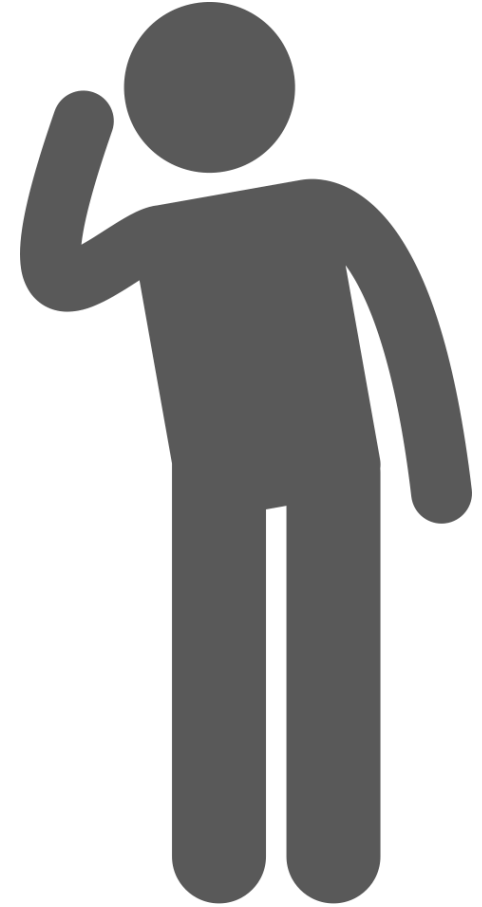
Instructions: Check the box that best represents your answers based on the frequency options provided.

When people talk to you, do you:	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. Make them feel that you're interested in them and what they have to say?		X		
2. Acknowledge what they say before offering your own point of view?			X	
3. Allow them to complain without arguing with them?	X			
4. Accept criticism without getting defensive?			X	
5. Restate messages or instructions to make sure you understood correctly?				X

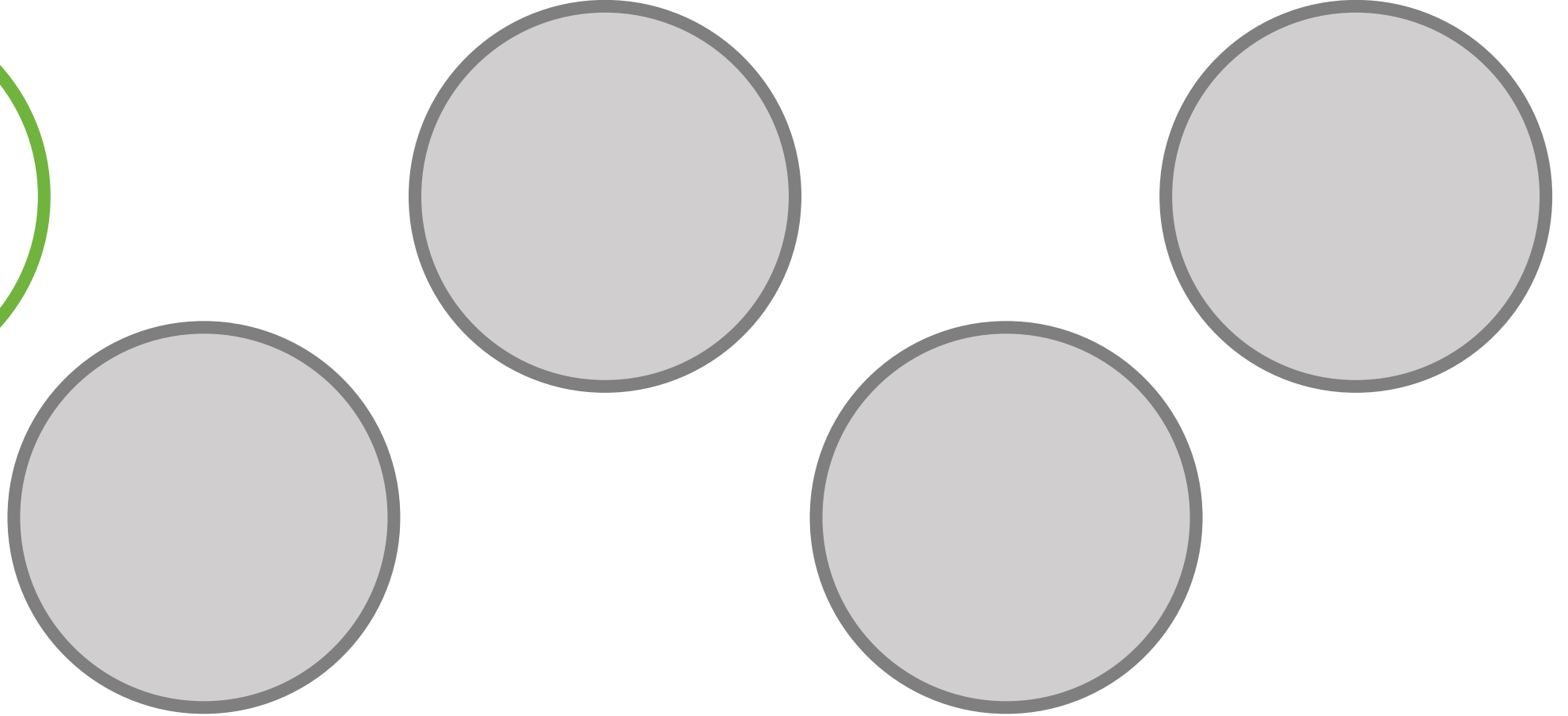
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2. Acknowledge what they say before offering your own point of view?				
3. Allow them to complain without arguing with them?				
4. Accept criticism without getting defensive?				
5. Restate messages or instructions to make sure you understood correctly?				
6. Make a concerted effort to focus on them and understand what they're trying to say?				
7. Make effective use of questions to invite them to say what's on their minds?				
8. Respect what they have to say?				
9. Keep your cool when they get angry at you?				
10. Think about what you want to say while they're talking?				
11. Feel that listening to them complain is annoying?				
12. Jump in before they're finished speaking?				
13. Pretend to be listening when you are not?				
14. Make judgments about who is worth listening to and who isn't?				
15. Offer advice before you are asked?				
16. Assume you know what they're going to say before they're finished?				
17. Share similar experiences of your own rather than inviting them to elaborate on their experience?				
18. Tune out when they start to ramble instead of staying engaged in the conversation?				

What did this assessment reveal or confirm about your listening habits?

listening techniques



JUST LISTENING



JUST LISTENING

what is it?

Listening to ... agree

reply

relate

solve



UNDERSTAND

JUST LISTENING

why is it important?

- Being heard is a deep human need
- To listen is to bear witness to someone's experience*
- Listening is a gift

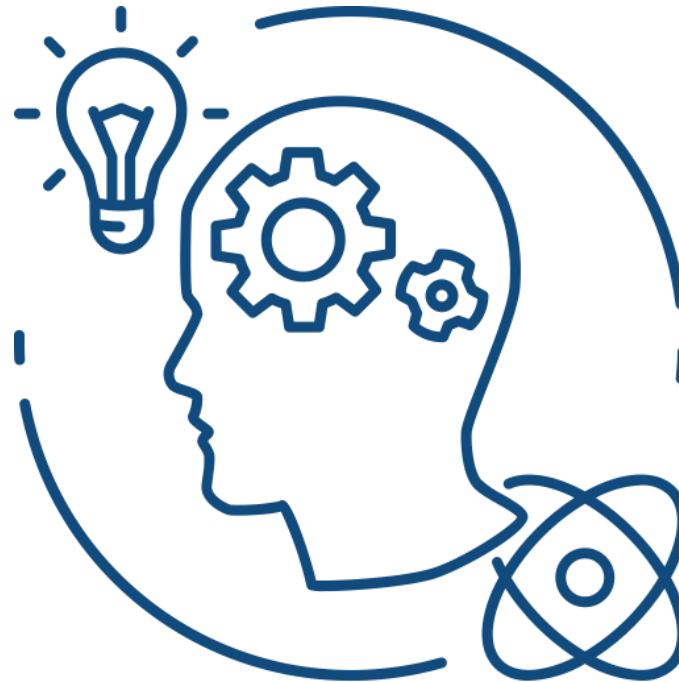


* From *The Lost Art of Listening* by Michael P. Nichols, PhD

JUST LISTENING

what gets in the way?

- A brain gap
- A self trap



JUST LISTENING

how do you do it?

- Notice the internal noise
- Notice who you are focusing on
- Let go



JUST LISTENING

practice



Find a partner

Speaker

- Tell a story about a time you were NOT seen, heard, or respected

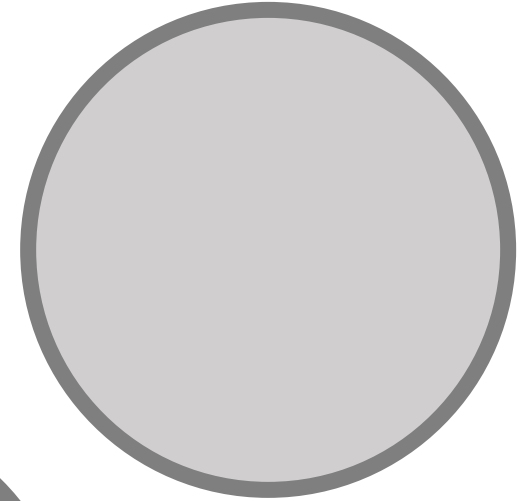
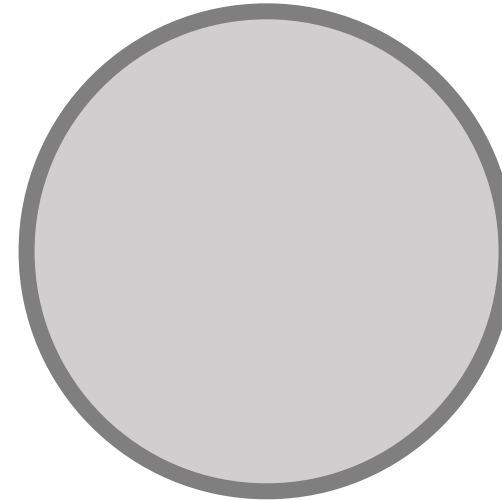
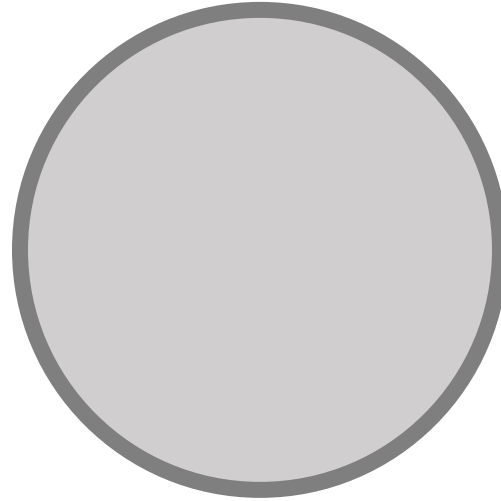
Listener

- Focus on the speaker
- Say “thank you”
Do not comment

PARAPHRASING



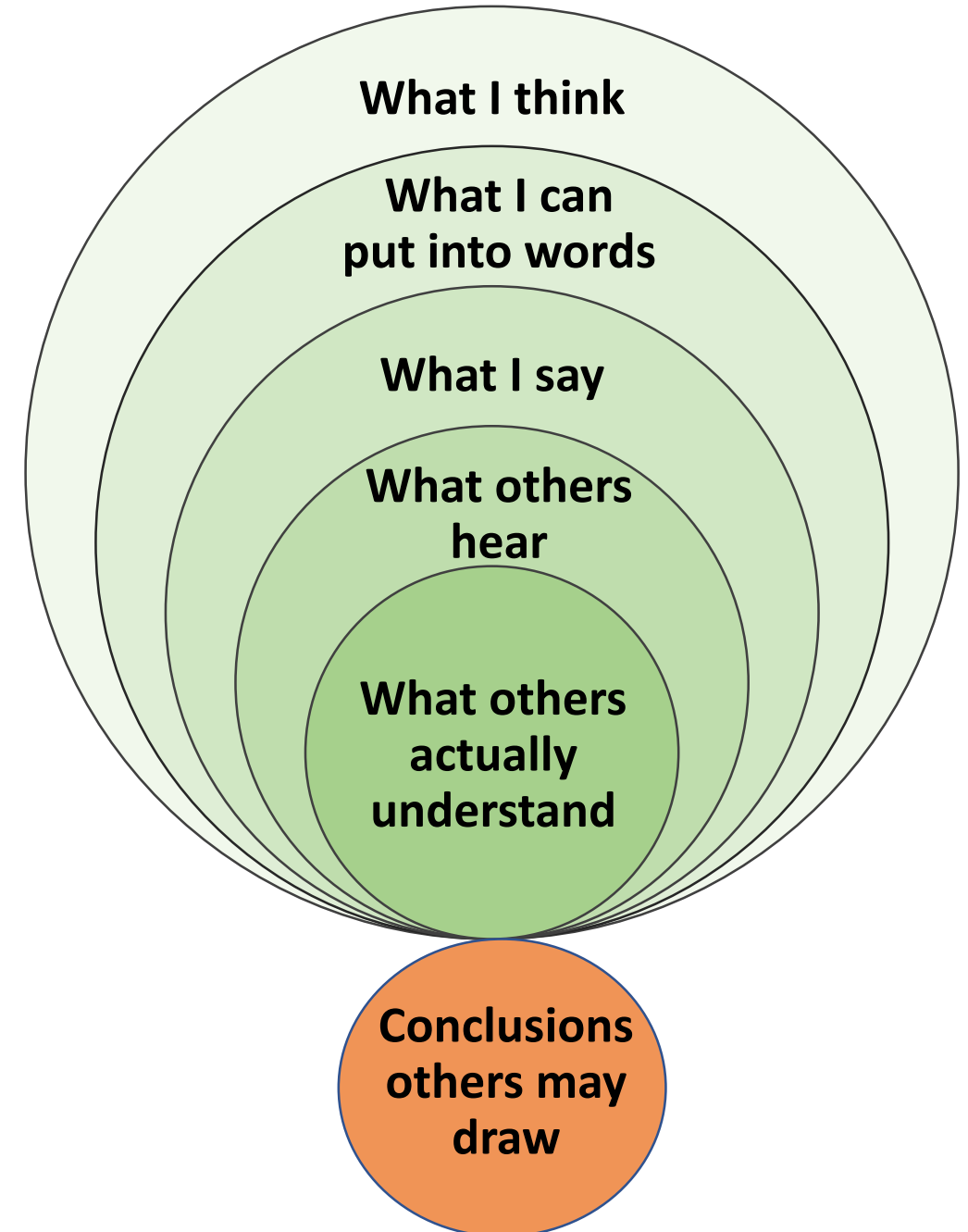
Just
Listening



PARAPHRASING

what is it?

Using my own words to express the meaning I got from what you said

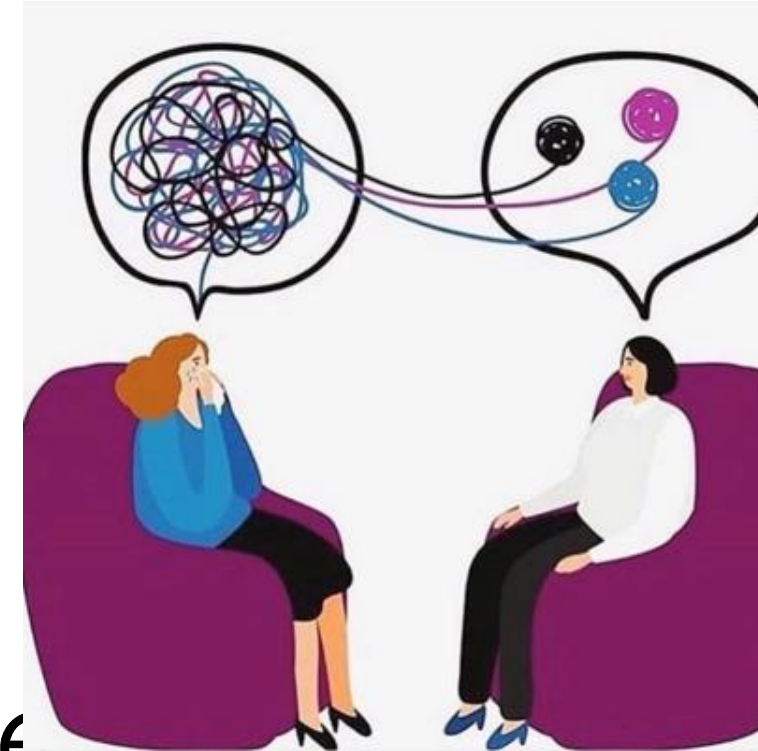


PARAPHRASING

why is it important?

Allows:

- Listener to check understanding
- Speaker to confirm, correct, expand, untangle
- Both to reach shared meaning



PARAPHRASING

how do you do it?

- Reflect the core message: feelings, information, or both

what gets in the way?

- Assumptions
- Reactions



PARAPHRASING

tips

- Use a tentative tone; ask for feedback
- Use mostly your own words
- Avoid your own opinions or feelings
- Reflect what you sense about their feelings or the impact on them



PARAPHRASING

practice

Find a partner



Speaker

- Answer the question below

Listener

- Paraphrase the information and feeling

What do you think about self-driving vehicles on public roads?

PARAPHRASING

additional resources

Paraphrasing Basics

What is paraphrasing? Expressing, in our own words, the meaning we got from what someone said.

Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraphrasing is the most direct way to show someone that their thoughts and feelings were understood. Paraphrasing helps people feel that their ideas are valid and respected because there is no judgment involved. Paraphrasing allows speakers to hear how their ideas are being interpreted by others. Paraphrasing gives speakers a chance to clarify or confirm to avoid misunderstanding. It's especially helpful when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic is complex or complicated. The words used can have more than one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your own words, share what you think the speaker meant. If the speaker's statement is short, keep your paraphrase short. If the speaker's statement is lengthy, try to summarize in your paraphrase. (It may help to break long statements into key points to follow-up on with separate parap To build trust in your intent to unde <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begin the paraphrase with a comm "It sounds like you're saying..." "Let me see if I understand..."

Paraphrasing Practice

Tip	Example(s)
Frame the paraphrase as a question, so that the speaker can respond to confirm, correct, and/or expand.	<p>"If I hear you right, you're saying...?"</p> <p>"So is it accurate to say...?"</p> <p>"It sounds like you expect...is that right?"</p>
Use your own words as well as some of the key words the speaker used, and explore your understanding of what the speaker meant.	<p>If someone said: "As a business manager, I want a clear understanding of the value you provide."</p> <p>You might paraphrase: "I hear that you'd like clarity about the value we bring to your business. By value, do you mean impact, services, or something else?"</p>
Reflect back what you sense about the underlying feelings or impact on the speaker.	<p>"That sounds like it's frustrating when..."</p> <p>"I'm sensing that you felt overwhelmed and close?"</p>
When you need a little more information to understand before you paraphrase, ask for an example.	<p>If someone said: "Sometimes the service isn't up to par."</p> <p>You might ask: "Could you give me an</p>

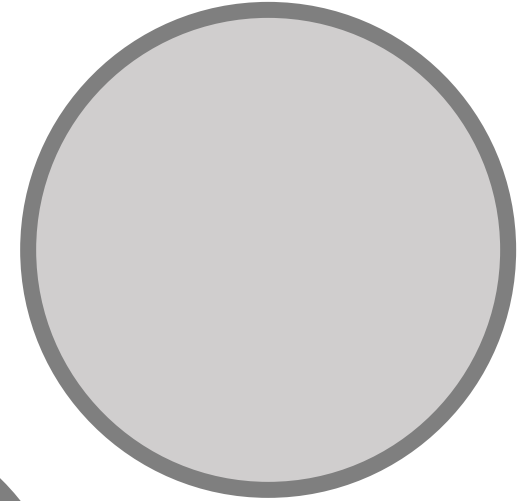
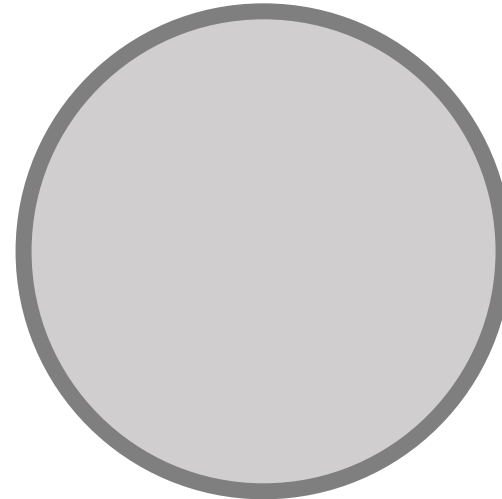
OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS



Just
Listening



Paraphrasing



OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

what are they?

Questions:

- That invite the speaker to share freely and steer the conversation
- To which you don't already know the answer

OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

why are they important?

They promote:

- Deeper thinking by the speaker
- Greater discovery and learning for the listener



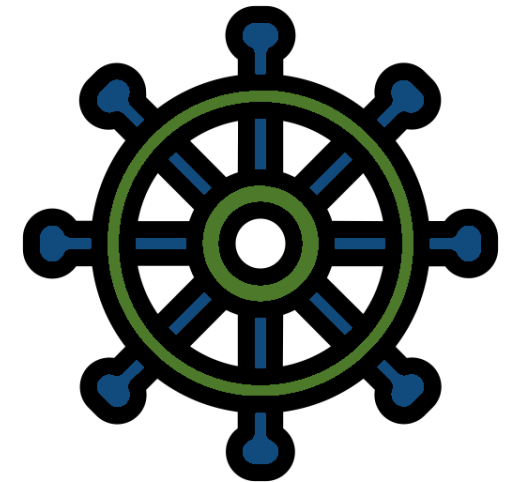
OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

how do you do it?

- Start with “What” or “How”
- Avoid limiting words

what gets in the way?

- Take more effort to think of
- Desire to be in control



OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

tips

- Tap into your interest – topic or person
- Consider the situation – explore or clarify
- Be careful with *why*

Open-ended versus Closed-ended Questions

Questions can help gather more information and check understanding. No type of question is better than another in every situation. Depending on what you seek to achieve, one type of question will likely be more effective than another. Two primary types of questions are open-ended and closed-ended.

Characteristics of Open-ended questions	Characteristics of Closed-ended questions
<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote discussion by asking someone to open up and share their thoughts, knowledge, and/or feelings.• Ask the respondent to think and make (possibly new) connections.• Hand control of the conversation to the respondent.• Are typically non-threatening (no judgment, bias, blame, or suggestion).• Can be time-consuming or require more effort to create and use.	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit discussion by asking for brief and specific answers, relevant facts, agreement, verification, decision, etc.• Ask the respondent to provide known information and/or clarify information quickly and concisely.• Keep control of the conversation with the questioner.• Can feel threatening (show bias or judgment, blame, or imply a suggestion).• Require little time investment or effort to create and use.

OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

practice

Customer:

“I really struggle to use your website. I just cannot find the information I search for.

The way it's organized doesn't make sense to me, it's not easy to read,

OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

practice



- How would you paraphrase what you heard?
- What open, curious questions could you ask to learn more?

OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

practice

Sample paraphrase:

Is it fair to say that you find the website almost unusable, despite your best efforts to find things on it?

OPEN, CURIOUS QUESTIONS

practice

Sample open, curious questions:

- What are some things you look for on our website?
- You said the website is not easy to read. What makes it difficult?
- How do the issues with the website impact you and your business?

UNDERSTAND NOT SOLVE



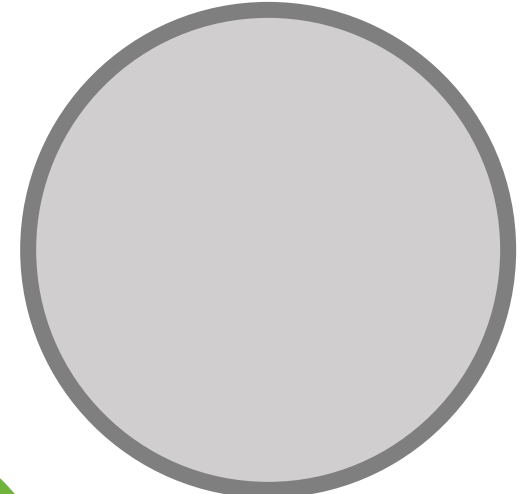
Just
Listening



Paraphrasing



Asking
Questions



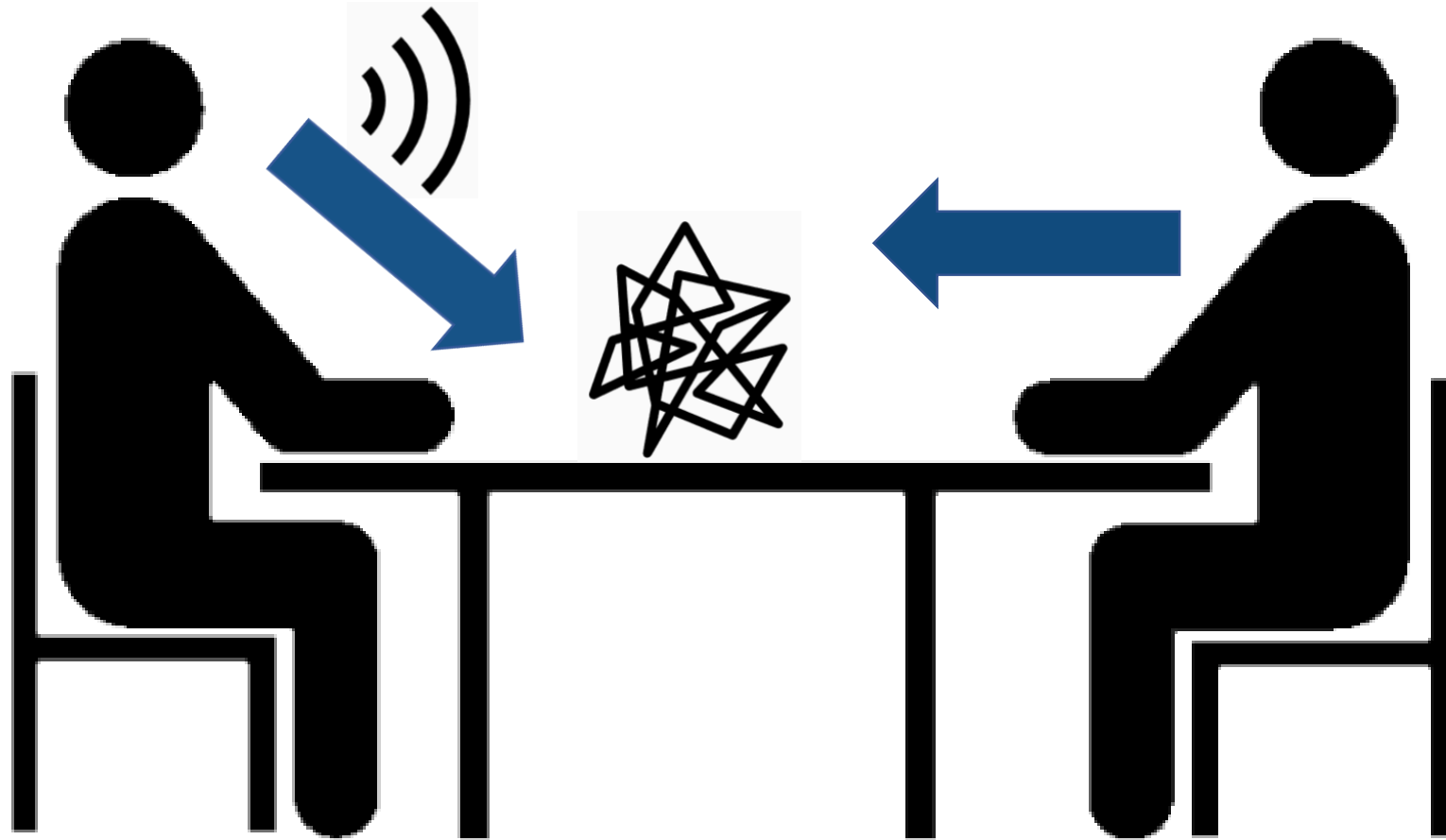
UNDERSTAND NOT SOLVE

what is it?

- Just what it sounds like...focus on listening to understand rather than letting your brain jump to problem solving
- It's harder than it sounds

UNDERSTAND NOT SOLVE

why is it important?



UNDERSTAND NOT SOLVE

how do you do it?

- Don't solve problems unless asked
- Restrain your problem solving instinct
- Give your brain something else on which to focus – understanding

UNDERSTAND NOT SOLVE

practice



Find a partner

Speaker

- Share a pet peeve
– either home or work

Listener

- Listen, paraphrase, and ask curious questions
- Do not offer

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS



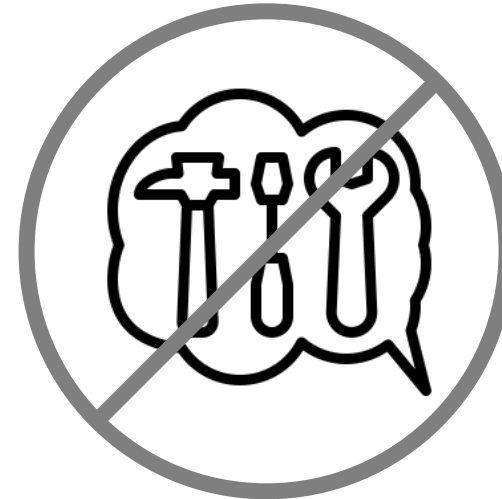
Just
Listening



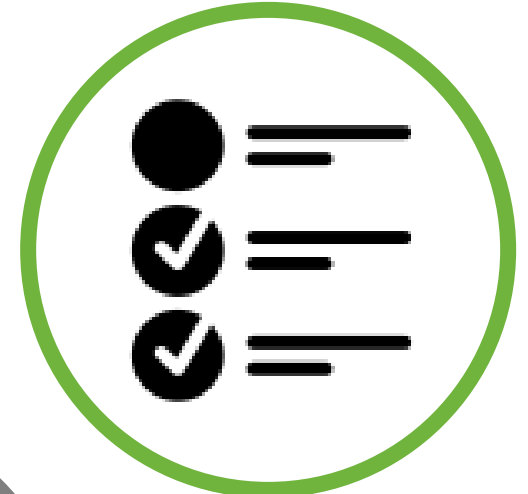
Paraphrasing



Asking
Questions



Not
Solving



LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

what is it?

- Expectations are beliefs about what should be or should happen
- Customers have expectations about what should happen when they work with us

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

why is it important?

- The only way to make satisfied customers is to meet their expectations
- We must know what the customers' expectations are in order to meet them

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

how do you do it?

1. Ask

2. Translate

what gets in the way?

- Assuming we know
- Getting hooked on specifics



LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

demonstration

Customer comments:

It seems like there are too many rules to follow.

I try to do what I think is a simple transaction, and I'm told I have to fill out more forms or provide extra approvals and justification.

I spend a lot of time on paperwork that I don't see the need for, and it takes me away from my regular work.

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

demonstration

Sample expectations:

- Process is not burdensome
- Know up front exactly what is needed and what the rules are
- See the value

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

tips

- Satisfied customers have expectations, too
- Paraphrase to confirm

Tips for Identifying Customer Expectations

If you get this...	Then...	Example Statements with Possible Responses:	
Straight expectation	Seek shared meaning of those words	Customer:	I expect you to be professional.
		Interviewer:	I'm curious, what does it look like to you to be professional?
Want (specific solution or request)	Look for the underlying, broader expectation	Customer:	I'd like to see reports organized differently. Highlight things we need to talk about, and limit the amount of information on a page.
		Interviewer:	It sounds like you expect reports to be clearer and easier to use than they are – is that right? - What would an ideal report show you? - I'm curious how you use the reports.
Disappointment story (form of reality)	Look for the mirror image	Customer:	I'm often in the dark about how our project is progressing, and it feels like I have things moving.
		Interviewer:	So, you expect to be informed of project developments, and that progress would happen without your intervention – is that right? - Tell me more about what project information is important for you to know and when.

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

practice



1. Read the statement and identify the expectations
2. Discuss with a partner

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

practice



Customer comments:

I recently ordered some brochures and was so pleased with how they turned out and how quickly we received them. On top of that, the cost was less than estimated! Mark was very helpful and went out of his way to make sure the product was exactly what we needed.

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

practice



Sample expectations:

- Quality product
- Quick turnaround
- Cost at or below quote
- Helpful, invested staff

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

how does it help?

Knowing expectations can:

- Dispel myths
- Properly place anecdotes
- Confirm validity
- Reveal blind spots

LISTENING FOR EXPECTATIONS

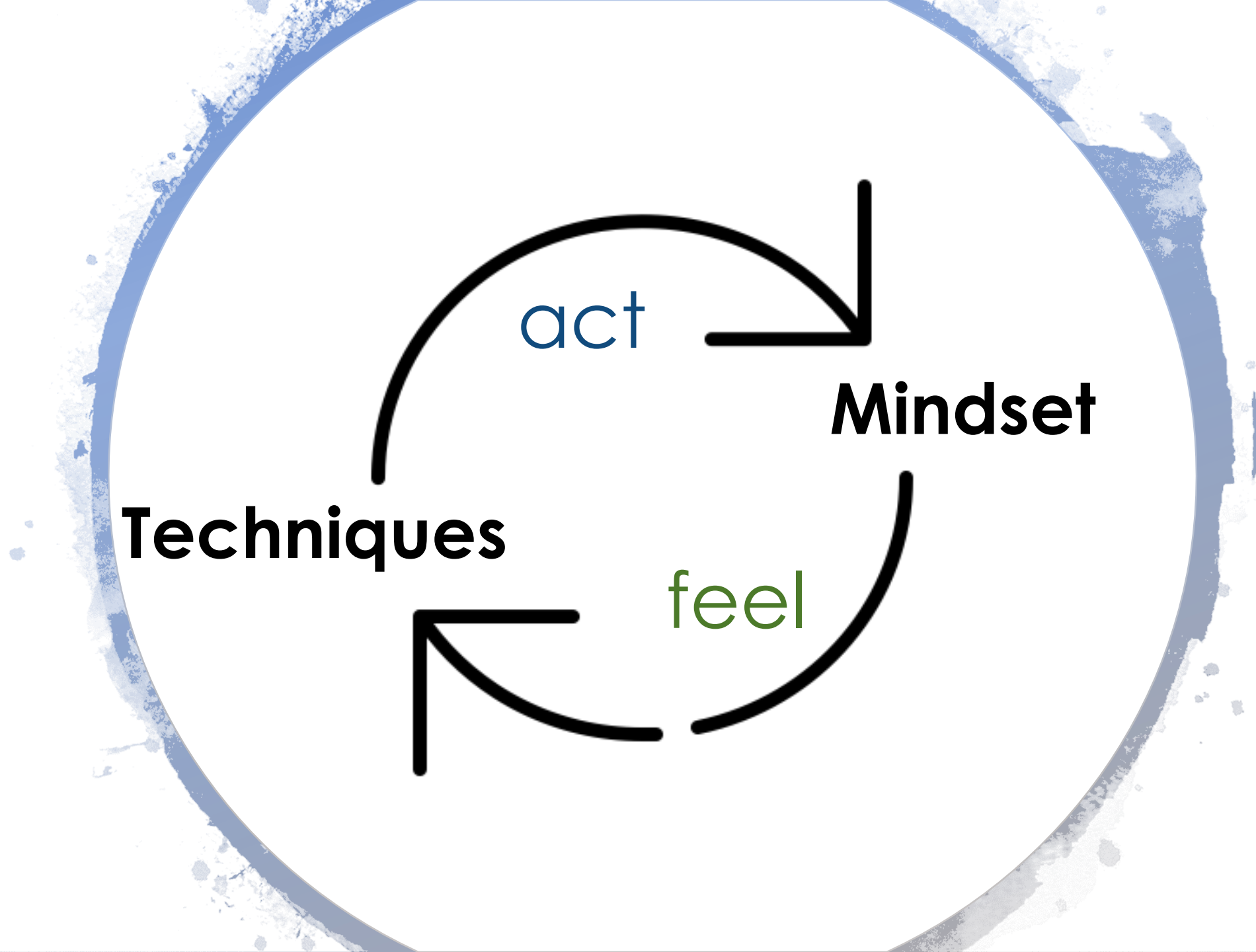
what is produced?

- Set of 5 - 8 expectation statements
- Used to guide decisions

Service Clarity	Be clear about what your team offers, how that will help our business, and how we access those services.
Tailored Approach	Get to know us and our business, and adapt the approach to how we work.
Collaborative Partnership	Bring your expertise and collaborate with us as a trusted partner.

mindset





act

Mindset

Techniques

feel

EMPATHY MATTERS

avoid the urge to...

- Defend
- Explain
- Convince
- Fix
- Disbelieve
- Blame

instead we can...

- Keep listening
- Seek to understand their perspective/experience
- Be curious
- Care



KEEP CARING

reasons we stop

- We can't
- Blaming them
- We already do that
- It doesn't sound important

how to overcome

- We could if
- Find responsibility
- Find out why it's not working
- Discover impacts

improving



NEXT STEPS

Good listening is a set of **habits**.
In order to get better, you must **practice**.



Listening Skill Building Ideas

Showing Empathy

- ❖ Be on the lookout for things that sound like complaints. When you hear one, take a minute to consider how that person may be feeling and provide an empathetic response.
- ❖ Read an article, website, or news story that comes from a different point-of-view than your own. Imagine the author is standing in front of you. Write down 3 responses you could give to show understanding and empathy.

Paraphrasing

- ❖ Read an article or watch a TED Talk. Pause at the end of each paragraph/point and paraphrase what you heard or read.

Listening without Solving

- ❖ Ask a friend about his or her pet peeve. Practice asking questions to learn more about their feelings or the problem's impact without offering any solutions or suggestions.

Asking Probing Questions

- ❖ Choose a word like "communication" or "upset" and practice asking a clarifying question every time you hear it this week. Try not to use the same question every time.
- ❖ Write a list of follow-up questions to use if someone answers "How was your day?" are you doing?" response, "Fine." a different question this week.

Asking

- ❖ Cho
- obs
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- que
- ask

HABIT BUILDING FORMULA

When _____, instead of

_____.

(trigger)

behavior)

(old

I will _____ because

_____.

(new behavior)

(motivation)

HABIT BUILDING EXAMPLE

When my coworker tells me about a project challenge, instead of jumping in with my suggestions, I will ask a curious question because it shows respect and helps more.

YOUR TURN

1. Think about one listening habit you'd like to improve.
2. Write a plan using the format below.
3. Share it with a partner.

When _____, instead of _____,
(trigger) (old behavior)

I will _____ because _____.
(new behavior) (motivation)

questions



MORE RESOURCES

- Electronic handout packet
- Lost Art of Listening by Michael Nichols
- [10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation](#) TED talk by Celeste Headlee
- [Brene Brown on Empathy](#) video



thank you!

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