Review of Concepts

- The difference between Positions and underlying Interests
- Key communication skills
  - Active listening...
- “Taking the bite out of” Angry, Hostile Statements
  - Reframing…
Meetings

Group “boundary” setting

- Time
  - when, how long...?
- Turf & territory
  - when, how long...?
- Task
  - What are we here to do...?
- Technology & tools
  - Microphones, live broadcast, time clocks, hand raising...?
- Membership
  - Who are legitimate/invited/privileged, etc. participants?
Public Meetings
A Scenario Based Exercise

Goal of exercise – to think together about public meetings & what skills can be used to improve them

1. Describe scenario – property to be developed, development proposal
2. Describe roles – meeting facilitators, stakeholders, “the public”
   i. Select 2 volunteer facilitators
3. Read scenario
4. Discuss scenario - what are the key issues likely to emerge
5. Read roles
   i. Select stakeholder roles
   ii. Interested public’s role – what is happening with meeting dynamics, peanut gallery…
6. Begin stop action role play
   i. Stop as action continues to discuss meeting dynamics
7. Debrief role play
Thank you!
The Relation Between Positions and Interests

Understanding the various interests behind a position can help to identify shared interests or values and produce alternative solutions which often meet the needs of more than one person or group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Definition</strong></th>
<th><strong>Example</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
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| a specific outcome or action perceived as meeting immediate needs | “Block the new dump!”  
“Send out revised minutes now!”  
“Find the deed for me!” |
| **Interest**   |             |
| Desires  
Fears  
Beliefs  
Values  
Concerns…  
…that a person hopes to advance through the position | “I’m concerned about my family’s health and the effect of the dump on property values.”  
“I’m going to be in big trouble if my enemies see that in print!”  
“I’m really upset about my mother’s deteriorating health and need to know what kind of care we can afford.” |
## Comparing Positions and Interests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A position is . . .</th>
<th>An interest is . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific action</td>
<td>Broad concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Outcome</td>
<td>Many possible outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimally negotiable</td>
<td>Fosters maximum discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demands result in near-term</td>
<td>Suggests long-term approaches to meeting needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to evaluate</td>
<td>Complex to evaluate</td>
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Good communication

• Too often we hear something and respond without having *listened* hard enough. Miscommunication is the result.

• A good listener creates the ideal conditions for information to be heard and exchanged.

• To listen carefully and focus on the speaker does *not* mean the listener agrees with the speaker.
Good communication II

What are the *first* things the speaker (angry or otherwise) wants from you as a listener?

– Your attention
– A respectful audience who gives them a chance to fully express themselves
– Responses that affirm you understand
  • basic content
  • their level of concern
Active listening

- Goal is to understand the situation from speaker’s perspective
  - How does speaker feel?
  - What are speaker’s thoughts and ideas?
  - What does speaker need or want?
Active listening II

- Steps to keep focus on the speaker
  - Attend closely to what is said, both verbally and nonverbally
  - Show understanding through nonverbal behavior
  - Note feelings and intensity as well as content
  - Restate the important thoughts, ideas and facts
  - Listen for and acknowledge speaker’s basic values
  - Do not interrupt, offer advice, suggestions or opinions
  - Do not bring up similar events from your own experience
  - Invite corrections and accept them gracefully
Skill: Reframing/ “Taking the bite out of” Angry, Hostile Statements

• Goal: restatement of angry words to retain and acknowledge key content while using less inflammatory language

• Example

  • Citizen – “The Supervisor has lied through her teeth about that property from the beginning. I now know her word isn’t worth the paper it’s written on!”

  • Rebutting/defensive response – “That’s plain wrong! You must not have understood a thing she has said for the past three months!”

  • Alternative Response: “So...based on your experiences, you are unable to trust any of the Supervisor’s statements about this property?”
**Reframing/ “taking the bite out of” Angry Statements**

- **Example II**
- **Citizen** – “You people are all in the pockets of the developer, that’s for sure. This meeting makes a mockery of democracy!”
- **Rebutting/defensive response** – “Come on, now! We’re following totally proper procedure by allowing the developer to make a presentation to the board.”
- **Alternative Response:** “So, you feel pretty strongly that the interests of people who aren’t the developer simply won’t be taken into account. Did I get that right?”
Responding to difficult behaviors (other ideas)

• Be transparent
  – Assert clearly what you can/can’t do, state what you are doing and why
  – Name what is going on
  – Refer to procedural guidelines, working agreements, behavioral norms

• Encourage everyone to attack the problem, not the people

• Is anger in danger of being directed at you?

• Evaluate the potential for violence
Difficult behaviors (cont.)

Escalate your interventions very deliberately and slowly, from the lightest to the heaviest.

- Record Concern
- Acknowledge, legitimate, deal, defer
- Refer to the record, rules or agenda
- Use body language to suppress or isolate
- Take them aside, talk directly about behavior
- Ask group support to suppress
  Suppress with group support
Advice on what to do
Positions and Interests

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Difficult Conversations

Three parallel conversations take place

- The “What Happened” Conversation
- The Feelings Conversation
- The Identity Conversation
The “What Happened” Conversation

- Situation is complex – no one has 100% of TRUTH
  - “Facts” are filtered through conflicting perceptions, interpretations, values
  - Conflict often more about what is important
  - Your power: can one participant (you) shift the conversation to “understanding”, away from “being right”?

- Who meant what – INTENTIONS
  - People in conflict typically jump to conclusions
    - Why the other person did/said something (how do you know?)
    - That the other person intended harm

- Who’s at fault – BLAME
  - To avoid blame, must defend or attack
  - Short-circuits talk about shared (not equal) responsibility for situation
The Feelings Conversation

- The situation is emotionally charged, putting each participant on edge

- Feelings are central to the conversation, but often only implicit – if they were unimportant, would the conversation be “difficult”?

“She wants me to talk about my feelings, but every time I get close I get emotion sickness.”
The Identity Conversation

- Difficult conversations can threaten our identity

  - How do we see ourselves?
    - What kind of person am I?
    - What are my values? What do I care about?
    - What am I saying to myself about me?
  - What choices can/do we make in a conversation about how we want others to see us?
A critical skill: re-learning to listen

“to listen”: the characters suggest the complexity of listening well
Good communication

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- A good listener creates the ideal conditions for information to be heard and exchanged.
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Basic *listening*+ skillset

**Reflection**
- A short well timed acknowledgement, like an underscore to what has just been said
- May be verbal, barely verbal, non-verbal
- Corrections welcomed

**Summary**
- Restatement of key themes of the recent flow of conversation, highlighting the topics and what participants have emphasized as important
- Corrections welcomed
- Ends with – so, where should the conversation go from here?

**Check in – Is this going OK?**
Reflection skills – mirroring what was said

- **Purpose** – to let both the speaker and listener affirm the message has been heard and understood as it was intended

- **Result** – when the speaker feels understood, the need to repeat or emphasize decreases, as does tension.

- **Types of reflections**
  - **Content** – listener paraphrases content of speaker
  - **Feeling** – listener repeats, paraphrases, infers feelings
  - **(Values, interests, needs)** – listener repeats, paraphrases, infers values, interests, needs
Reflection skills - types of reflections

- **Statement** – “First he tells me to make the decision, but then he always makes it himself anyway!”

- **Content reflection**
  - So, he makes the decisions anyway???

- **Feeling reflection**
  - So, he makes the decisions anyway!!!!!!
  - It sounds like you’re feeling frustrated, even betrayed by him?
    - NOTE: If you don’t get it quite right, people will usually corrected, e.g. “Frustrated, yes, but not really betrayed. It’s more that he doesn’t respect me.”

- **Value reflection**
  - You want your input to be taken seriously?