

Collaborating Conversations: Understanding Your Role

Participant Guide

Prepare Yourself

Use System 2 Thinking



System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control



System 2 allocates attention to the mental activities that demand it, including complex processing. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the sense of agency, choice, and concentration.

Remember, you can:

- **Breathe**
- **Focus on your body**
- **Say a mantra**
- **Label how you feel**
- **Take a break**

Recognize your default response

Avoidance

- Focusing on details to the exclusion of the real issues
- Making noncommittal statements that sound like, but are not really, agreement
- Joking to distract from the real issues in a conflict

Attack

- Concealing one's own interests
- Denigrating or rejecting the other's arguments
- Denying responsibility
- Lying

Accommodation

- Saying 'Whatever you choose is fine'
 - Avoiding stating your position for fear of conflict
 - Trivializing your needs and elevating other needs
-

Identify your interests vs position

Position Your stance on a topic

Interests Underlying desired outcomes or reasons for the stance

Also consider...

Needs The human element – powerful interests such as the drive to be seen as successful

Values Moral or underlying beliefs

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Understand the problem

Place the problem in the center with parties on the outside

Placing the problem at the center and both of you on one side, changes the dynamic. This requires a mindset change and can take some practice; however it can remove your attachment to the issue, and allow you to view it objectively.



Listen to Understand

1. Start from a stance of curiosity and maintain attentive body language
 - Lower your internal voice and remain interested in what the speaker is saying.
 - Incline your body toward the speaker, face the other squarely at eye level, and maintain an open position.
 - Stay an appropriate distance from the speaker.
 - Establish effective eye contact.
2. Ask questions to understand the speaker's perspective
 - Ask open-ended questions, e.g. "Can you say a little more about that?"
 - Ask why this issue is important.
 - Ask for any additional information that has not been shared, e.g. "What information do you have that I/the other doesn't?"
3. Paraphrase and reflect
 - Express, in your own words, your understanding of what the speaker is saying, e.g., "What I hear you saying is...", "Do you mean...", "Are you saying..."
 - Validate how the speaker feels about what is being stated, e.g. "It sounds like you are really frustrated about this"; "If I were in your shoes, I'd feel ____ too".
4. Summarize and restate the main points of the conversation
 - Summarize to make sure you and the speaker have a common understanding
 - e.g., "I now understand your concerns about this matter, and I agree that discussing at our staff meeting would be the best way to bring it to everyone's attention and get feedback on how to proceed."
 - e.g., "In summary, we all agree that..."

Reframe the Conversation: 'But' to 'And'

You trigger different parts of the brain when you reference an excuse with a 'but' statement, as opposed to generating a solution with an 'and' statement. Instead of finding a rationale for a decision already made, you are problem-solving.

Managing Multiple Stakeholders

- Remind the group of obvious common interests
- Try to keep inquiring questions to the point
- Invite people to identify additional potential common interests quickly
- Frequently remind the group of the shared interests already identified
- Invite the group to share what they have understood any agreements to be