

# Interpersonal Competence and Effective Reform

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9:15-10:45

11:00-12:30



# Who makes a difference?

- So much of what you have learned in this workshop is logical and analytical, but effective reform is also both **personal** and **interpersonal**
- Tell me about a specific person you know who is making the world a better place through their work on behalf of reform or better governance.
  - How do they think and act? What do they do that makes them successful?

# Overview



- Communication is a learned skill like tennis or scuba
- Communication skill is key to effective leadership, influence and reform
  - More negative things happen due to poor communication than practically anything else in complex social systems (e.g., natural hazards, medical error)
- Systems thinking and conscious communication are the two abilities that separate the good from the great
  - Expressives, automatics, and conscious communicators



# What is conscious communication?

1. Speaking and listening
2. Providing useful feedback
3. Collaborating across differences
4. Fostering dialogue
5. Self-awareness and vulnerability

*Let's explore the best practices that go with each of these.*

# 1a. Speaking and listening

- Reform requires that you promote your “narrative” over other competing stories in the culture (framing, management of attention)
- The importance of assertiveness (not aggressiveness)
- Hearing versus active listening
  - Culturally appropriate eye contact and nonverbal feedback
  - Avoiding interruptions
  - *Checking for understanding/grasping*



## 1b. Speaking and listening

### The Physical Metaphor



- Pass things around the room counting the number of times something is dropped.
- What are some parallels between passing objects and passing information, and expectations?
- When have you “dropped the baton” and what could you have done differently?

## 1c. Speaking and listening

**In communication, the only message that matters is the one that is received.**

Requires:

- Real time monitoring/feedback
- Respect for message and person
- Considerable practice, does not come naturally to most people
- Refocusing one's communication goal from message delivery to "evidence" of grasping



## 2a. Providing useful feedback

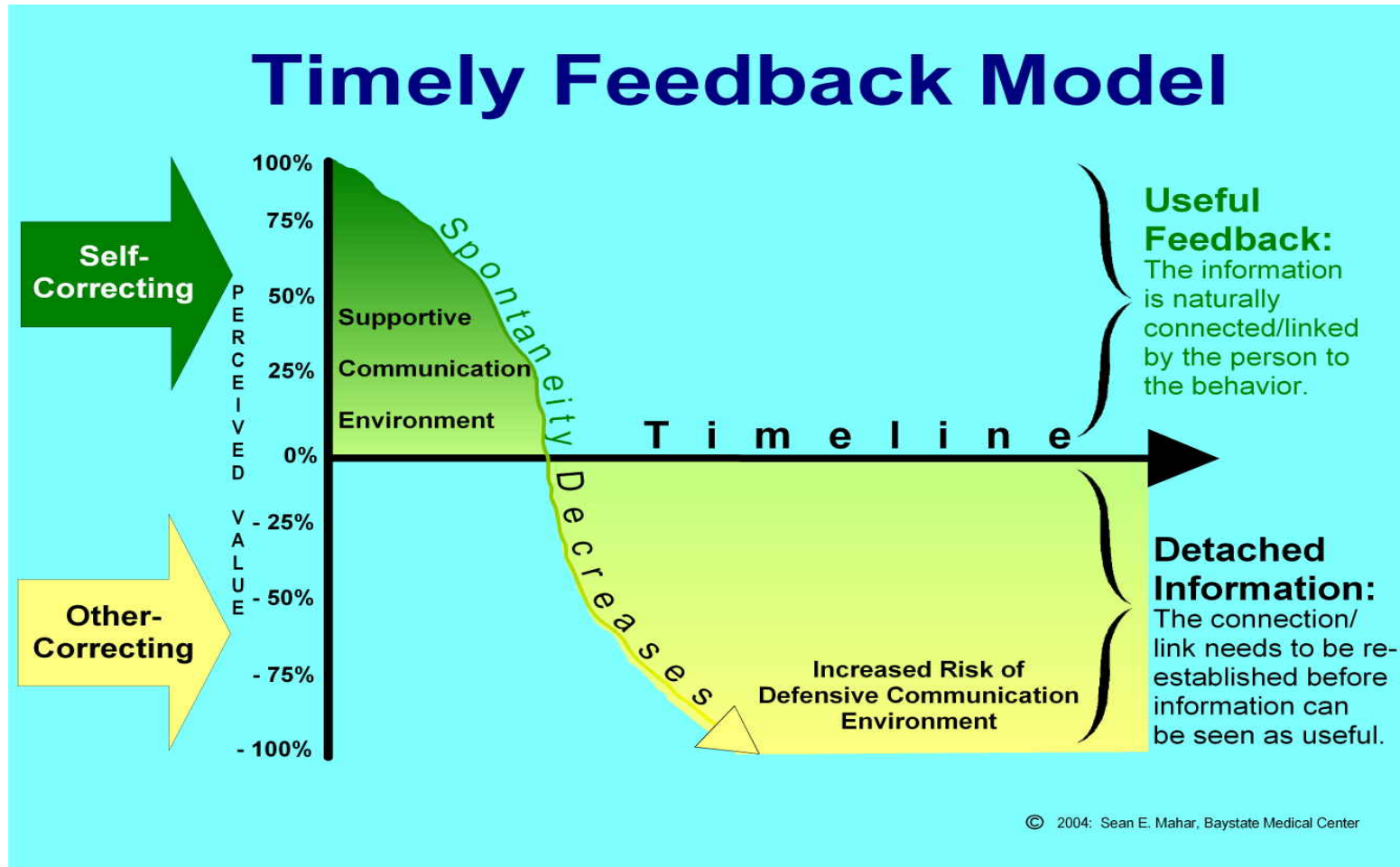
- How do you feel about giving critical feedback to others?



- What techniques work best?
  - The importance of focusing on how another person's behavior makes you feel
- Make sure the feedback you give is timely!
  - Naturally linked to behavior
  - Less likely to lead to escalating defensiveness
  - More likely to bring about desired change



## 2b. Providing useful feedback



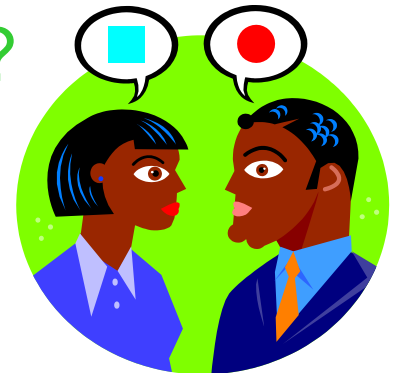


## 2c. Providing useful feedback

- Feedback is best received within the context of a genuine, ongoing relationship
- Be sensitive to cultural differences—in some countries, people prefer feedback in writing in advance of any kind of conversation
- Employ the idea of an emotional bank account (Covey) with people you are hoping to influence and reach
- Make deposits frequently so that withdrawals are better received
- Other examples of effective feedback?

## 2d. Providing useful feedback

- ☐ How do you handle being wrong?
- ☐ Do you listen to negative feedback? Do you seek it out?
- ☐ What would you think about working with or hiring someone who was dramatically different from you?
- ☐ How are you already always listening?





## 2E. Culture matters in giving feedback

- In general, East Asian cultures emphasize indirectness, allowing others to save face, and adapting one's communication to the receiver
- Ubuntu and communalism in African thinking emphasizes the importance of kinship and of social interdependence; the community comes first
- How do the principles I have presented so far today—conscious communication, the need to check for grasping, and the importance of feedback—translate in your cultures?



## 3a. Collaborating across differences

- First and most important challenge is to develop a deep appreciation for the uniqueness of your own perceptions, your specific temperament and world view
  - Seeing yourself as others see you is a huge challenge
  - In the U.S., ALL attempts to improve communication among people of different races must begin with helping Caucasians to understand that they have ethnicity
  - The fundamental communication problem is the belief that one's perceived reality is THE only reality

# You Must First Empty Your Cup

- A university professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master quietly served tea, the professor talked about Zen.
- The master poured the visitor's cup to the brim, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflowing cup until he could no longer restrain himself.
- "It's overfull! No more will go in!" the professor blurted. "You are like this cup," the master replied, "How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup."



# Ask yourself...

- How am I **ALREADY** communicating?
- Where do I get my data about this?
- How can I get more?

## 3b. Collaborating across differences

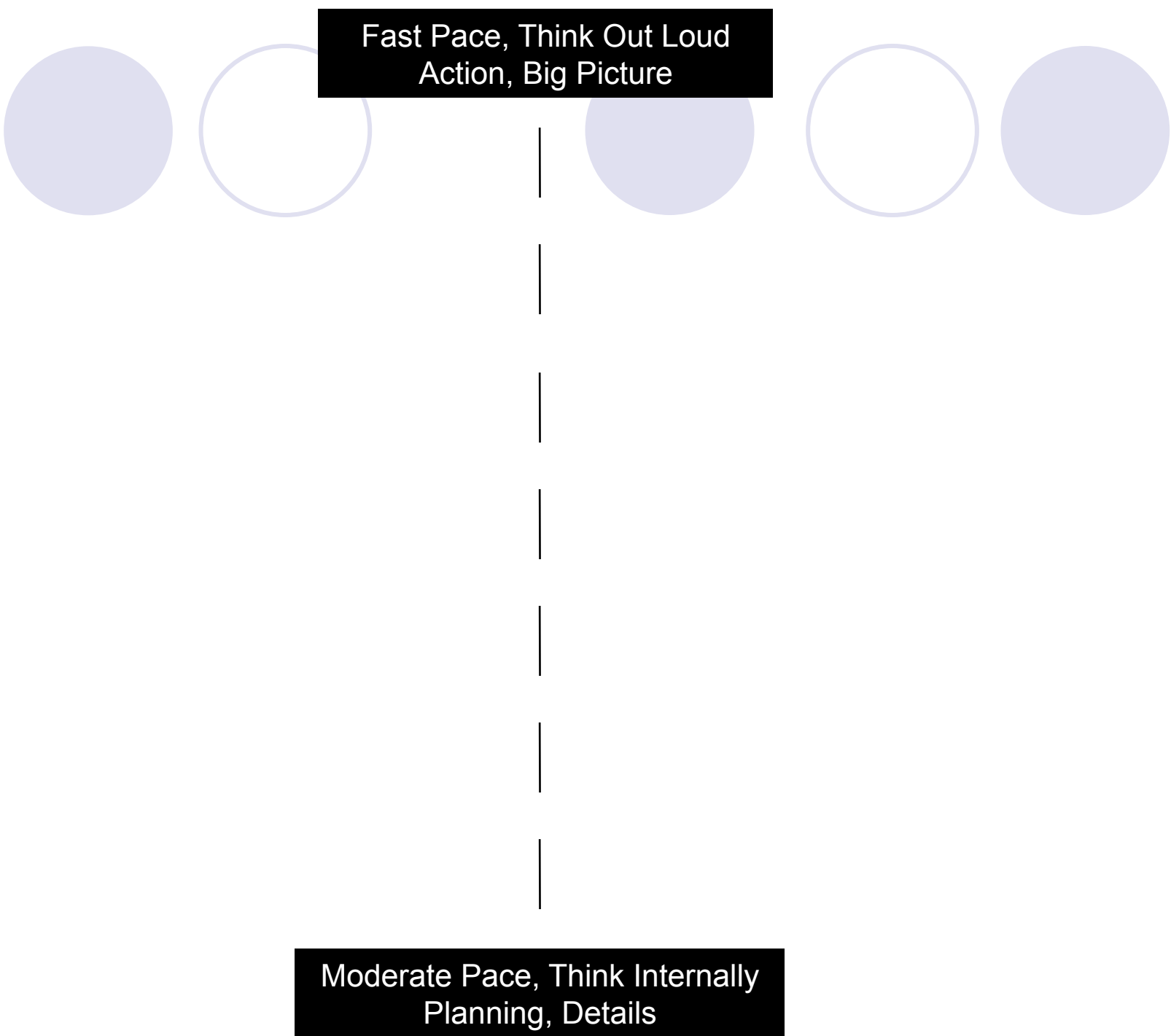
- o How observant are you???
- o Look very closely at this video clip
- o <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>
- o Count EXACTLY how many times the people in white shirts successfully pass the basketball--Dribbling is not passing
- o What does this video tell you about the partial nature of perception? About the possibility of collaborating with others?





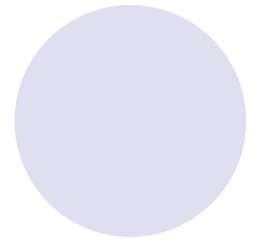
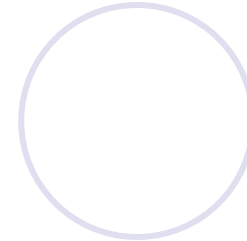
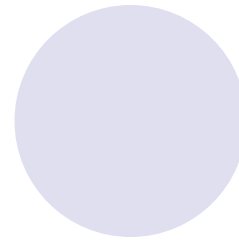
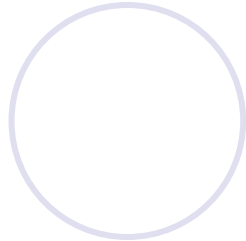
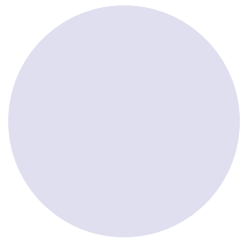
## 3c. Collaborating across differences

- Once you understand your own world view, you need to develop a deeper appreciation of others' perceptions
- Peoples' communication styles tend to vary across two primary dimensions
  - Extraversion vs. introversion
  - Focus on task vs. focus on people
- Influenced but not determined by culture
- What has been your experience with “type” analysis (DISC, Myers-Briggs, etc.?)



Fast Pace, Think Out Loud  
Action, Big Picture

Moderate Pace, Think Internally  
Planning, Details



Task  
Results  
Bottom Line



People  
Process  
Relationships

Fast Pace, Think Out Loud  
Action, Big Picture

red

Direct & Decisive  
**(Driver)**

yellow

Outgoing & Optimistic  
**(Expressive)**

Task  
Results  
Bottom Line

People  
Process  
Relationships

blue:

Logical & Precise  
**(Analytical)**

green

Consistent & Supportive  
**(Amiable)**

Moderate Pace, Think Internally  
Planning, Details

# Leadership Priorities

| <b>Results<br/>Action</b>  | <b>People<br/>Ideas</b>   | <b>Process/Plan<br/>Cooperation</b>   | <b>Quality<br/>Excellence</b>  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Drive<br>Goal orientation<br>Directness<br>Speed<br>Decisiveness | Creativity<br>Vision/Big picture<br>Possibilities<br>Motivated people<br>Fun/Enthusiasm | Teamwork<br>Collaboration<br>Respect/Tact<br>Quality process<br>Preparation | Accuracy<br>Thoroughness<br>Completion<br>Analysis/Logic<br>Fairness |
| <b>RED</b>   | <b>YELLOW</b>   | <b>GREEN</b>  | <b>BLUE</b>  |

### 3d. Collaborating across differences

- Strength: Something you do well or easily
- Blind spot: A strength that is overused

*Confidence overused becomes arrogance*  
*Decisiveness overused becomes controlling*  
*Accommodating overused becomes passive*

- Are you aware of your blind spots? If so, what do you do to about them when relating to others?

**Potential Blindspots:**

Over-controlling  
Domineering  
Defensive  
Blunt/insensitive  
Inflexible  
Arrogant

RED

Task  
Results  
Bottom Line

BLUE

**Potential Blindspots:**

Over analyze  
Lost in detail  
Unrealistic standards  
Overly critical  
Need to be right  
Aloof

Fast Pace, Think Out Loud  
Action, Big Picture

**Potential Strengths:**

Results focused  
Direct & Decisive  
Get things started  
Take risks  
Challenge status quo  
Driven to achieve  
Confident

**Potential Strengths:**

Quality oriented  
Detail focused  
High standards  
Well organized  
Analytical/Logical  
Diplomatic  
Fair & Just

Moderate Pace, Think Internally  
Planning, Details

**Potential Strengths:**

See the big picture  
Creative  
Motivate & inspire  
Optimistic & enthusiastic  
See new possibilities  
Personable  
Persuasive

**Potential Strengths:**

Easy going  
See multiple viewpoints  
Calming influence  
Supportive  
Good listener  
Careful and prepared  
Reliable

**Potential Blindspots:**

Unrealistic ideas  
Attention-seeking  
Lack follow-through  
Over-expressive  
Overlook details  
Easily bored

YELLOW

People  
Process  
Relationships

GREEN

**Potential Blindspots:**

Too accommodating  
Overly passive  
Resist change  
Slow to start  
Indecisive  
Avoid risk & conflict



## 3e. Collaborating across differences

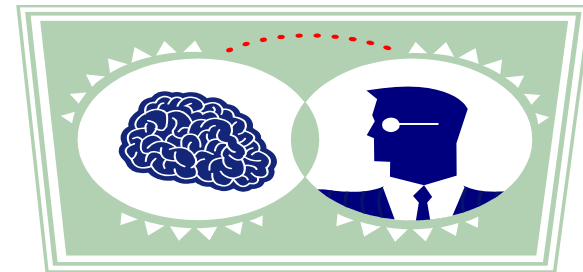
- Summary:

- There is no one right or best style
- Understanding your current style as others see it is a precondition for learning anything new
- If you are unaware of your blind spots, you are the only one!
- Adapt and connect to others' preferences to the degree that you can
- Avoid the cycle of withdrawal and resentment that accompanies misunderstandings over time



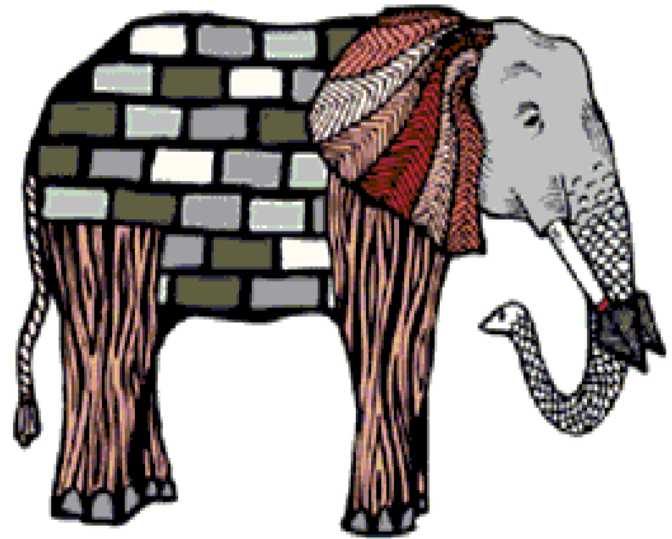
### 3d. Collaborating across differences

- Emotional intelligence is mainly the ability to understand one's own style and temperament and to communicate in ways that both play to your strengths and at the same time make room for the different strengths others can bring to the conversation
- We both read and express emotions through communication



## 4a. Fostering dialogue

- Dialogue versus discussion
- All of us is smarter than any one of us
  - The blind men and the elephant
  - Bruce comes to class
  - The “three faces of Bill”
- Learning by expanding





## 4b. Fostering dialogue

- ☐ Use inquiry to continually invite others to share the reasoning for their conclusions
- ☐ If you offer a conclusion or belief, add how you came to that conclusion
- ☐ You can find common ground only if you back down the ladder of inference from conclusions to experience
- ☐ Encourage everyone to speak in terms of their personal experience, and you do it too
  - ☐ Not “public subsidies don’t work” but “in my experience, public subsidies have not had the impact that I would have expected.”

## 4c. Fostering dialogue

Discuss in Pairs:

- How can we construct and sustain a communicative climate where multiple perspectives are encouraged, even if they are at odds with one another?
  - In your experience, what behaviors build positive energy, spontaneity, and trust?
  - What behaviors build negative energy and tentativeness?

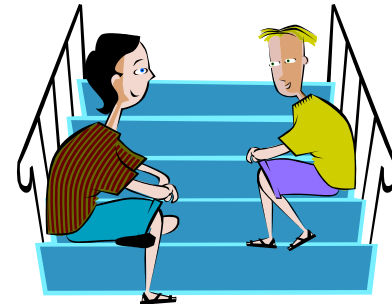
## 4d. Fostering dialogue

- What are some ways that you have found to promote dialogue?

- ☐ Stop talking. Wait. You may be surprised by the good ideas others have if you wait long enough
- ☐ Limit psychological and physical noise
- ☐ Make your thinking visible
- ☐ Suspend judgment. Try to see things from someone else's perspective.
  - ☐ If you are puzzled by another's position, sincerely ask for their reasoning which will reveal their interests and create the possibility of common ground. If others seem puzzled by you, share your own reasoning. You can't argue conclusions.

## 4e. Fostering dialogue

- What are some ways that you have found to promote dialogue?
  - Ask questions, don't make pronouncements
  - When things get sticky, go slow. Don't rush things just to lower the anxiety level, you may miss out on an important lesson.
  - Don't see every talk turn as a chance to either agree or disagree. Use "and" not "but." Use phrases like:
    - I have a different perspective
    - I see the situation differently
    - I have an alternate view





## 4f. Fostering dialogue

Or say this...

- ☐ *“Here’s what I know about the situation”*
- ☐ *“These are the criteria I used”*
- ☐ *“This is the logic I employed to arrive at this recommendation”*
- ☐ *“Here are some reasons that, for me, make this the best way to go”*
- ☐ *“Let’s look at the data I used to support my decision”*

## 4g. Fostering dialogue

And while you're at it...

- ☐ *"I don't have a complete understanding of the situation"*
- ☐ *"I may have made a bad call here"*
- ☐ *"I can't answer that question, I just don't know"*
- ☐ *"I am not an expert in that area"*
- ☐ *"I may not know enough yet to answer"*





## 5a. Self-awareness and vulnerability

- While self-awareness, humility, and vulnerability are the hallmarks of effective, emotionally intelligent communicators, these behaviors must be deployed in the context of unequal power relationships
  - Environmental debates about rising sea levels endangering Bangladesh and the pros and cons of “coming to the table”
  - What are some examples of how good communication practices must be modified to take into account existing power relationships?

## 5b. Self-awareness and vulnerability

- **Remember:**

- The more successful you have been in your career, the *less* motivated you will be to change
- Intelligence, leadership, and communication ability are only weakly correlated
- More about discipline and commitment than insight
- The only message that matters is the one that is received
- The only thing you can control is your own behavior
- If you do not know your weaknesses as a communicator, you are the only one
- Understanding your current communication style as others see it is a precondition for learning anything new—you must “empty the cup!”

# Interpersonal competence and successful reform

- What have we discussed today that can help support collaboration, transparency, effectiveness and accountability?
- What is the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and effective reform?

