

Chapter 4 Communication and facilitation

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Communication and facilitation

Good communication and facilitation skills are among the most important assets of a facilitator or mediator. When they have no formal authority or decision-making power, conflict managers' power stems from their people and communication skills: their ability to steer discussions, articulate issues and concerns clearly, and establish rapport, trust and understanding among the parties.

The activities in this chapter are designed to make participants aware of the key ingredients of good communication and facilitation, and provide opportunities for practising the relevant skills. To help participants to understand the usefulness of communication skills, the chapter introduces the role of a conflict management practitioner and processes for cooperative problem solving and interested-based negotiations. The activities should be practised, following a simple step-by-step approach, before they are applied to more complex negotiation and mediation situations.

The first session reviews the key ingredients of good communication: showing respect and paying attention, listening actively, asking open-ended questions, summarizing the main point(s) of a statement, rephrasing and reframing.

Session 4.2 aids listening skills; as a listener, the conflict management practitioner must be able to absorb and interpret information correctly (content).

Good communications requires demonstrating to all the parties in a conflict that their messages have been understood. Sessions 4.3 and 4.4 demonstrate how the facilitator can do this by accurately summarizing, interpreting and acknowledging. When a conflict party realizes that he/she has been understood, she/he is more likely to listen and accept others' views or opinions.

In a heated discussion, people's statements are not always sober and unbiased. Emotional attacks from one side often result in defensive behaviour and counter-attacks from the other. The art of rephrasing such statements to make them more acceptable without changing their content helps to cool down the discussion and encourages participants to understand each others' concerns. Session 4.5 on reframing helps participants to develop this skill

As a discussion leader, the facilitator/conflict manager should be able to absorb fully the participants' contributions, rephrase and summarize them correctly, and – if necessary – comment on them. With practice, the facilitator will become capable of summarizing entire sections of a discussion accurately. Session 4.6 "Handling difficult group dynamics" provides opportunities to apply the necessary skills.

SESSION 4.1 DO AS I SAY OR DO AS I DO?



PURPOSE: to demonstrate the impact of both verbal and body language.



CROSS REFERENCE: Section 7.3.1.



TIME: 30 minutes.



MATERIALS: none.



PREPARATION: none.



STEPS

- 1 Explain that this activity is a warm-up or energizer. Instruct participants to follow instructions carefully.
- 2 Provide the following instructions as you demonstrate the action:
 - Please stand up, stretch your hands above your heads, and wiggle them around.
 - Now make big circles with your arms on both sides of your body.
 - Put your fingers on your shoulders and move your elbows in circles.
 - Now put your arms directly out in front of you and make small circles in different directions, etc.
- 3 Ask everyone to put their hands on their ears, *but you put your hands on your knees*.
- 4 Stop and ask who did what you said and who did what you did. Why? Discuss how this activity demonstrates the importance of non-verbal and verbal communication and the role of leaders or facilitators. Do people normally believe more what they hear or what they observe?
- 5 Conclude by stressing the following key learning points.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Non-verbal communication is a very important part of communication.
- What people perceive with their eyes often has a greater impact than what they hear. When non-verbal behaviour and tone of voice contradict the content of the message, observers are more influenced by what they see and perceive than by the words they hear.
- A large part of the success or failure of a facilitator or conflict manager depends on the impression she/he makes on the audience or target group. Good communication and facilitation skills are among the most important assets of a facilitator or conflict manager. When they have no formal authority or decision-making power, the power of facilitators/conflict managers stems from their people and communication skills – their ability to steer the discussion, articulate issues and concerns clearly, and establish rapport, trust and compassion among the parties.
- Self-presentation techniques such as boasting, facade techniques and self-belittlement have negative effects on communication because they:
 - reduce the information value of the message;
 - widen the psychological distance between sender and receiver, rather than minimizing it;
 - weaken the speaker's own mental stability.
- When seeking to create a lasting impression, the following rules should be observed:
 - Try to accept yourself and “be yourself”.
 - Do not be overconcerned about creating a “good impression” – apprehension and worry waste energy.
 - Be aware of what is going on inside you. Your attitude and communication should reflect your genuine feelings.
 - Practise selective authenticity: “I will not communicate everything that I am experiencing, but what I do communicate should be real and authentic.”



SESSION 4.2 DIFFERENCES IN UNDERSTANDING

**PURPOSE:**

- to make participants aware of the factors that influence interpretations of verbal messages and can lead to misunderstandings;
- to show ways of dealing skilfully with differences in understanding.

**CROSS REFERENCE:** Section 7.3.**TIME:** 30 minutes.**MATERIALS:** flip chart.**PREPARATION:** photocopy Attachment 4.2.A “Participant’s questionnaire” for each participant.**STEPS**

- 1 Explain the activity using an example (Attachment 4.2.B step 2) and let the participants decide whether each of the statements is true, false or cannot be judged because of lacking information.
- 2 Read the exercise text (Attachment 4.2.B step 4) and distributes the participant’s questionnaire (Attachment 4.2.A).
- 3 Give participants time to fill in their answers.
- 4 Record the results on a flip chart by marking who answered true, false and cannot be judged for each of the ten statements. This is most effective when all participants give their answers to one question, before moving on to the next question.
- 5 Give the “correct” solutions (Attachment 4.2.B step 5). Discuss the results.
- 6 Start a discussion centred on the following points:
 - Individual interpretations about substantive matters can make it difficult to solve disagreements. Understanding the different interpretations that different parties have of a situation is one of the most useful skills in managing conflict.
 - What people understand differs. Understanding depends on many factors; see the factors influencing understanding in Attachment 4.2.C, and compare them with the case in the exercise. Misunderstandings are common and not necessarily the result of bad intentions.
 - The sender should communicate her/his message in a way that makes it easy to memorize and understand.

- The receiver should listen with an open mind and without preconceived ideas.
 - Misunderstandings can be minimized by repeating what one has understood in one's own words (paraphrasing).
 - Accept the fact that different interpretations exist. "The map is not the land." Everybody has their own perceptions, which are the basis of their own subjective reality. There is no such thing as an objective truth.
 - Adopt an understanding frame of mind. Seek to understand and show understanding. Explain yourself.
 - Show interest in the perceptions and experiences of other people. If you are willing to listen to them, they will be more willing to listen to you.
- 7 Ask participants to suggest factors that influence the different interpretations of the speaker and the listener. Participants are likely to express these factors as negative aspects. Encourage them to rephrase these views into recommendations for good communication.
- 8 End the session by summarizing the following key learning points.



KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Because most conflicts are based on differing interpretations of the facts, one of the most useful skills in conflict management is to explore the different understanding that each party has of a situation.
- People are more likely to be open if they assume that there are gaps in their own understanding ("blind spots"). Current understanding should not be discarded, but considered as a hypothesis to be validated.
- People who see or hear the same thing may still arrive at very different interpretations about what they see or hear. This happens virtually every time more than one person experiences a situation. As long as impressions are not compared and differences noticed, an individual takes what he/she experiences as reality, and will not suspect that others might have different realities.
- Because conflicts are about the different meanings that people give to events, policies, institutions, etc., they can be managed by changing the way people feel and behave.



TRAINER'S NOTE 4.2.A THE CONCEPT OF REALITY

This exercise demonstrates with words what Session 2.7 "Partisan perceptions" does with pictures.

When the correct solutions are announced (step 5), participants often seek to defend their own decisions. Rather than considering whether other solutions can be justified, the main point to make is that participants have come to widely differing interpretations of the same words. The exercise therefore serves as:

- a reminder of how important it is in communication to listen carefully and make sure that your interpretation is in line with what the speaker wants to say;
- a warning not to jump to conclusions;
- an opportunity for discussing the concept of reality.

The concept of reality is based on the following points:

- Each individual has a subjective reality, made up of what that person knows, perceives, believes, etc. and influenced by her/his culture, education and so on. What a person does not know and cannot perceive is not part of his/her reality; for example, a colour-blind person might know about colours but cannot perceive them. “The landscape (our subjective image) is not the land” (Korzybisky).
- When people agree about something they share a common or agreed reality. The fact that most or even all people agree about something does not mean that this view of reality is true. For example, for a long time, people believed that the earth was the centre of the universe.
- There may be an objective reality, but it cannot be known, perceived or experienced directly.

Attachment 4.2.A Participant's questionnaire

Decide which of the following statements:

- **is true:** agrees with the information given in the story;
- **is false:** contradicts the information given in the story;
- **cannot be judged (?):** because the story does not provide enough information.

| | | | | |
|----|---|------|-------|---|
| 1 | The executive denied the employee a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 2 | The employee did not receive a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 3 | The employee was angry because he did not get a raise in salary and therefore gave notice to leave the organization | True | False | ? |
| 4 | The employee wished to leave the organization because of the refusal to pay him more money | True | False | ? |
| 5 | His colleagues were sorry because the employee had left the organization | True | False | ? |
| 6 | His colleagues discussed the issue with the employee | True | False | ? |
| 7 | The executive did not take part in the discussion | True | False | ? |
| 8 | The executive asked the employee to leave the organization | True | False | ? |
| 9 | His colleagues were sorry that the employee did not get a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 10 | The employee was generally well liked and there was a discussion about whether something should be done | True | False | ? |

Attachment 4.2.B Trainer's background sheet

1. Explain the task, and the meaning of "true", "false" and "cannot be judged (?)".

2. Give the following example:

"A secretary did not appear in her office one day. Her colleague said that she had felt ill the day before. On her desk was the photograph of a young man called Charles, with a heart drawn around the name."

3. Let participants assess the following statements:

| | | | |
|---|------|-------|---|
| The secretary is ill | True | False | ? |
| The secretary's boyfriend is called Charles | True | False | ? |

In both cases "?" is the correct answer.

4. Read the following story and distribute the questionnaires:

An executive did not propose to raise the salary of one of his employees. The employee gave notice to leave the organization. His colleagues felt sorry because he was generally well liked. There was a discussion about whether something should be done about it.

5. Answer sheet:

| | | | | |
|----|---|------|-------|---|
| 1 | The executive denied the employee a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 2 | The employee did not receive a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 3 | The employee was angry because he did not get a raise in salary and therefore gave notice to leave the organization | True | False | ? |
| 4 | The employee wished to leave the organization because of the refusal to pay him more money | True | False | ? |
| 5 | His colleagues were sorry because the employee had left the organization | True | False | ? |
| 6 | His colleagues discussed the issue with the employee | True | False | ? |
| 7 | The executive did not take part in the discussion | True | False | ? |
| 8 | The executive asked the employee to leave the organization | True | False | ? |
| 9 | His colleagues were sorry that the employee did not get a raise in salary | True | False | ? |
| 10 | The employee was generally well liked and there was a discussion about whether something should be done | True | False | ? |

Attachment 4.2.C Factors influencing understanding

On the part of the sender:

- clarity of the message;
- amount of information provided;
- completeness of the information;
- channel of communication;
- language.

On the part of the receiver:

- language;
- quality of listening;
- attentiveness/ability to concentrate, rather than:
 - judging: “That is a stupid idea, anyway, you don't really understand”;
 - defending: “But that was not my fault”;
 - advising/problem solving: “It is obvious that you need to do this”;
 - day-dreaming: “Wow, that girl/guy looks great”.
- interest;
- intelligence;
- memory/capacity to retain information;
- interpretations influenced by:
 - own past experience;
 - preconceived ideas/prejudices/stereotyping;
 - mood, temper;
 - attitude towards the issue or the sender.

SESSION 4.3 PROBING

**PURPOSE:**

- to help participants understand the issues and concerns of conflict parties and conflict management practitioners;
- to build a foundation for problem solving and stimulate participants' thinking about possible directions;
- to focus participants on conflict parties' needs and interests.

**CROSS REFERENCE:** Section 6.2.2.**TIME:** 45 minutes.**MATERIALS:** none.**PREPARATION:**

- copy the riddle (Attachment 4.3.A) on to a flip chart or transparency;
- photocopy Attachment 4.3.B “Open-ended questions” for each participant.

**STEPS**

- 1 Briefly brainstorm what probing is. Explain that probing is developing open-ended questions with the objective of soliciting more information about interests (see Attachment 4.3.B).
- 2 Explain that the following activity is a fun way of probing. Ask the participants to form groups of four to six to find the answer to a riddle.
- 3 Explain that the solution to the riddle will be given to one person in each group. The other group members must find the solution by asking that person questions with “yes” or “no” answers.
- 4 Take the selected people aside and give them the riddle and answer. Explain that they do not have to remember the riddle because the whole group will be told it.
- 5 Display the riddle where everyone can see it throughout the activity. Ask anyone who has played this game before to act as an observer in her/his group.
- 6 When it has found the solution, each group should keep it to itself, and wave their arms. The game can be stopped as soon as one group reaches the solution, providing that all the groups have had sufficient time to try – about ten minutes.

- 7 Once the riddle has been solved reflect on what happened by asking :
- What helped you to probe – active listening, building on ideas, creative thinking, clarifying information, analysing the problem carefully?
 - What hindered your probing – not listening carefully, jumping from one question to another, lack of creative thinking, making assumptions?
 - How does this relate to training? Why is probing an important skill for trainers – it draws people out, solves problems, clarifies questions with participants' inputs and opinions, facilitates?

HINTS Normally open questions are used for probing, but in this exercise the use of closed questions forces participants to probe well in order to solve the problem.

Source: Adapted from Braakmann and Edwards, 2002.

Attachment 4.3.A Riddle

A man was found dead in the desert. Near him was a package. If he had opened the package he would not have died. What was in the package?

Answer: a parachute!

Alternative riddle:

Walter spent three days in hospital. He was neither sick nor injured, but when it was time to leave he had to be carried out. Why?

Answer: Walter was a newborn baby!

Attachment 4.3.B Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions:

- are used to encourage people to share information about their views and interests;
- are essential in exploring and expanding perspectives, impacts and possible solutions;
- communicate to the answerer that the facilitator and group are interested in his/her/its perspectives and will take time to hear what she/he/it has to contribute.

Open-ended questions should:

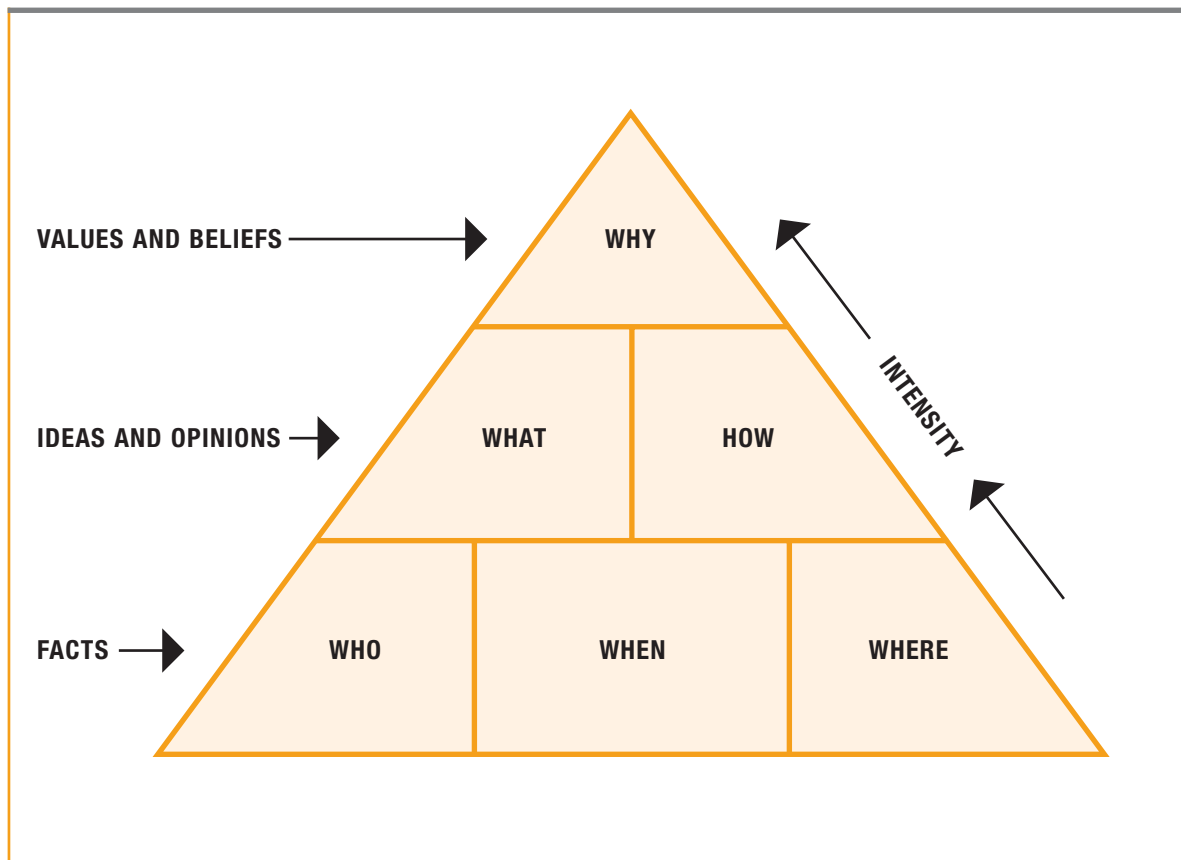
- start with: What? When? Where? Who? How? or Why?

Examples of open-ended questions:

- What do you believe has changed?
- When did this issue first emerge?
- Where do you think the problem first began?
- Who is responsible for the outcome?
- How does this issue relate to the other points we have discussed?
- Why is this issue more important than the other issues?

Guidelines for use:

Use a model for questioning:



Open-ended questions are very useful in helping the disputing parties to listen to one another's views, and for moving people away from discussions of their initial positions towards discussing their underlying needs or interests.

Open-ended questions should not be used just to make people speak more. Facilitation must remain focused on the substance of the conflict and on moving the group forward. Questions are determined accordingly.

SESSION 4.4 CONTROLLED DIALOGUE

**PURPOSE:**

- to give participants practice in active listening and summarizing statements;
- to demonstrate how the style and atmosphere of a discussion is influenced when the listener acknowledges and demonstrates his/her understanding of the speaker's message, before giving her/his own arguments.

**CROSS REFERENCE:** Section 6.2.2.**TIME:** 20 to 30 minutes.**MATERIALS:** none.**PREPARATION:** copy Attachment 4.4.A "Controversial topics" on to a flip chart.**STEPS**

- 1 Explain the purpose and design of the exercise. Demonstrate with a volunteer how the activity should be done.
- 2 Divide participants into groups of four. Two members of each group will do the exercise while the other two observe.
- 3 The active pair of group members select a controversial topic to be discuss, and take sides – one for and one against.
- 4 The active participants discuss the issue for about five to ten minutes. Each has to summarize the arguments of the other to that person's satisfaction before commencing his/her own arguments.
- 5 After the discussion, the observers give their feedback to the active players, focusing on how well the players observed the rules, difficulties on the part of the sender or the receiver and suggestions on how to improve.
- 6 The participants change roles and repeat the exercise.

- 7 After the exercise, reconvene the participants and discuss the experience using the following questions:
 - Were the rules adhered to?
 - How easy or difficult was it to summarize statements to the satisfaction of the speaker?
 - What typical communication patterns and mistakes made it difficult for people to understand each other (see Attachment 4.4.B)?
- 8 Wrap up the session by explaining that good listening derives from a basic attitude. People with the right attitude usually do the right thing. An attitude that supports good listening makes the listener:
 - care about what the other person is saying;
 - avoid assuming that she/he knows what the other will say;
 - avoid assuming that he/she has understood, without paraphrasing or inquiring to test that understanding;
 - willing to take time to listen and acknowledge what the other is saying.
- 9 Conclude by emphasizing that the key to good listening is being genuine. Wrap up by discussing the following key learning points.



KEY LEARNING POINTS

- All parties need to be accepted and understood. To most participants, being understood is more important than being agreed with.
- To demonstrate an interest in understanding what the speaker is saying, use the key ingredients of good communication: show respect and pay attention, listen actively, ask open-ended questions, summarize the main point of a statement, rephrase and reframe.

HINTS Although no real-life conversation is ever likely to follow the pattern of this exercise, the exercise does provide practice of important communication skills – listening, acknowledging and summarizing. The trainer can ask participants to identify situations where it is necessary to summarize statements; these skills can be useful in emotional situations, where communication is difficult, when the meaning is unclear, when the conversation is going round in circles, when one is not listened to.

Attachment 4.4.A Controversial topics

- One should only eat vegetarian food.
- Professional boxing should be forbidden.
- Authoritarian education is good for children.
- Women do not make good managers or leaders.
- Violent movies should be forbidden.
- Smokers should pay higher health insurance fees.
- One should always tell the truth.
- One should not use cell-phones inside restaurants.
- Horoscopes are a hoax.

Attachment 4.4.B Common communication mistakes

Frequent mistakes on the part of senders:

- not organizing their thoughts before speaking;
- not formulating arguments clearly;
- trying to cover too many aspects in one line of argument;
- using too many arguments, one after the other, without giving receivers time to take them in and digest them;
- continuing to talk without taking into account the receivers' capacity to retain messages;
- not reacting to statements made by others – conversations do not progress logically according to a predetermined pattern.

Frequent mistakes on the part of receivers:

- not giving their full attention to senders;
- thinking about their own arguments instead of listening: forgetting what has been said and their own arguments;
- focusing on details rather than the essence of the sender's argument;
- including in their summaries things that the senders have not actually said;
- mixing summaries with their own assumptions;
- adding their own opinions and conclusions to summaries.

SESSION 4.5 REFRAMING: THE ART OF DIPLOMATIC REFORMULATION



PURPOSE: to give participants practice in translating toxic, threatening or positional statements into statements of concern or problems that can be responded to positively.



CROSS REFERENCE: Section 6.2.2.



MATERIALS: flip charts.



TIME: 30 to 45 minutes.



PREPARATION:

- copy Attachment 4.5.A “Examples of reframing” and Attachment 4.5.B “Reformulating statements” (leaving the suggested reformulation column blank) on to flip charts;
- Photocopy Attachment 4.5.C “Instructions for group work” for each group of four participants.



STEPS

- 1 Introduce the session by explaining that in a conflict situation, people tend to make toxic, threatening or positional statements. Attacks, criticism, blame – such as “You are uncooperative and egoistic” (see Attachment 4.5.A for other examples) – do not make it easy for others to respond productively, and therefore do not help resolve problems. Reframing – the art of diplomatic reformulation – is an important skill that requires three steps:
 1. listening to ensure that you understand the underlying interest, which can be substantive, procedural or relationship (see Session 2.6 “Main conflict ingredients”);
 2. removing anything that is unproductive, i.e., positions, threats or demands;
 3. restating the message, including the real issue or interest, in a neutral, positive and hence more acceptable way. “So, that is what is important to you...” or “It sounds as though what you are concerned about is...”.
- 2 Show participants the flip chart of Attachment 4.5.B (minus the reformulation column) and ask them to suggest diplomatic reformulations. Record their suggestions on the flip chart.
- 3 Explain that participants will now practise reframing. Ask them to form groups of four. Two participants in each group take the roles of conflict parties A and B. The other two act as mediators A1 and B1, who reframe the statements of A and B.

- 4 After the exercise has been repeated with the roles swapped, reconvene the participants and start a discussion based on the following questions:
 - What was easy and what was difficult about applying the technique?
 - How did reframing affect the discussion?
 - How and when can this technique be used by facilitators/mediators?
- 5 Wrap up the session by discussing the following key learning points.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Every strong statement contains and is prompted by an underlying interest or concern.
- People communicate more productively when they believe that their needs are being addressed.
- Facilitators and conflict managers should learn to reframe messages diplomatically by being clear and distinct on the issue, but acceptable – respectful, appreciating, understanding – to the speaker. Be hard on the subject, and soft on the speaker.
- The conflict management practitioner is the model for good communication. If he/she communicates positively and constructively, the participants will do too.
- In a mediation meeting, the conflict parties should always be made to feel that at least one person understands them – the conflict manager.
- When negotiations appear to be getting nowhere, finding areas of agreement can be extremely important in encouraging the opposing parties to persevere.



TRAINER'S NOTE 4.5.A BUILDING REFRAMING SKILLS

This exercise should be done by gradually increasing the level of difficulty. In the first round, it may be difficult for those in the mediator role to reframe every toxic statement. Participants playing the conflict parties should therefore be asked to make their first statements relatively simple and short, and allow the mediators to reformulate only one or two of the elements of their statements.

Attachment 4.5.D describes a method for reframing statements and finding common ground when more than two parties are involved by finding a common action statement that all can agree with.

Attachment 4.5.A Examples of reframing

| Formulation that invites resistance and opposition | Acceptable diplomatic reframing |
|--|---|
| <p>Negative or insulting words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● conflict ● quarrelling | <p>Replace by more neutral terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● misunderstanding, different viewpoints, open questions, issues to be clarified ● dispute |
| <p>Disparaging personal characterization</p> | <p>Replace by more respectful, positive formulations Replace overall criticism of the person by feedback regarding individual traits that could be changed/ improved</p> |
| <p>Attacks, criticism, blaming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “You never pass on information!” ● “You only value your own opinion” | <p>Reframe into wishes, expectations, requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “May I ask you to keep me informed” ● “It would be good if you considered other people’s views” |
| <p>“You messages”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “You always insult me” ● “You are uncooperative and egoistic” | <p>Reformulate as “I messages”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I feel hurt when I hear words like...” ● “I would appreciate any kind of help from your side” |
| <p>Generalizations, simplifications, exaggerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● always, never ● everybody, nobody | <p>Replace by more differentiated statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sometimes, often ● some, a few |
| <p>Restriction of freedom – orders, commands, force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “You have to understand...” ● “You have to follow orders...” | <p>Replace by requests, wishes, etc.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Please try to understand...” ● “Please respect the norms and rules” |
| <p>Emotional outbursts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “If you keep mingling with that scum you will end in the gutter!” ● “You never appreciate anything that I do for you” ● “You have ignored my orders for the hundredth time” | <p>In summarizing the statement, name the emotion shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Your mother worries about...” ● “Mr B is frustrated because...” ● “Y is angry because...” |

Attachment 4.5.B Reformulating statements

| | Statement | Suggested reformulation |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Colleague to colleague | "You are wrong" | "I see it differently" |
| Colleague to colleague | "You must realize that your suggestion is totally unrealistic." | "I still cannot see how this could be implemented. Could you explain it please?" |
| Colleague to colleague | "You have the bad habit of bringing me important files just before closing time" | "It would help me if you could bring important files in time" |
| Superior to staff member | "You are always so touchy when I point out your mistakes" | "Please accept my feedback as a constructive contribution to improving your performance" |

Attachment 4.5.C Instructions for group work

1. Select a conflict case in which group members A and B are the conflict parties; for example, a husband and wife in a family conflict. As well as different viewpoints regarding the issue – such as the discipline of their children – A and B also have relationship problems, which are manifested as criticism, complaints, attacks, etc.
2. A and B start a conversation in which they each defend their own viewpoints and attack one another's arguments. They also blame, criticize and attack each other. When A makes a statement, mediator A1 reframes that statement in a diplomatic, non-aggressive way, making sure that A is satisfied with the essence of the reframed message. Then B answers, and mediator B1 reframes her/his message, etc.
3. After ten minutes, stop the role play, and discuss your experiences with the rest of the group for about five minutes.
4. Swap roles and repeat the role play, with mediators A1 and A2 becoming conflict parties A and B, and vice versa.

Attachment 4.5.D Reframing for multiparty situations

In situations involving many parties the equivalent to reframing is a common action statement. This summarizes the interests of all parties in one statement, as illustrated below.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---|------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1. PHASE | Statement party A | | Statement party B | |
| 2. PHASE | Interest 1 | Interest 2 | Interest 3 | Interest 4 |
| 3. PHASE | Joint interest statement: “How can we...?” or “What can we do that will...?” | | | |

Examples of finding common ground

Step 1: “Let me take a minute to summarize what I am hearing each of you say. There seem to be a number of differences, but also some similarities.”

Step 2: “It sounds as though one group wants to measure the land boundary from the riverbank, and the other wants to measure it from the middle of the river.”

Step 3: “Even so, you all seem to agree that you want the boundary to be fair to both groups and to take into account the changing shape of the river.”

Step 4: “Have I understood you correctly?”

An alternative approach to reframing is to look for areas of agreement, for example, by asking: “In addition to these differences, I heard some agreement. Would anybody like to share with the rest of the group some areas where she or he saw agreement?”

SESSION 4.6 HANDLING DIFFICULT GROUP DYNAMICS

**PURPOSE:**

- to give participants practice in the facilitation skills needed to handle difficult group dynamics through participation, observation, reflection and feedback;
- to give participants experience of possible ways of dealing with difficult group members.



TIME: two and a half hours.

**PREPARATION:**

- prepare two copies of the role play scripts, cut into slips for each role (Attachment 4.6.A);
- photocopy Attachment 4.6.B “Tips for managing difficult group members” for each participant.

**STEPS**

- 1 Introduce the session by explaining that it provides practice in dealing with various difficult behaviours from group members through a role play involving villagers in a natural resources conflict.
- 2 Divide the participants into two groups. Explain that both groups will role play the same situation simultaneously, with a trainer observing. Each person will receive a slip with her/his instructions for the role play, which he/she should not share with other group members. In each group, one person will play the facilitator's role, while the others play roles as various villagers.
- 3 Stress that the effectiveness of the role play depends on how effectively participants enter their roles. Explain that the room should be rearranged to make it look as much as possible like the village conflict setting.
- 4 After the room has been rearranged, select the two facilitators and distribute the role slips, making sure that dominant roles are taken by dominant people, etc. Give the groups five minutes to prepare for the role play. Extra participants can act as observers or take part by playing themselves.
- 5 Start the role play, and after 15 minutes ask the players to stop. Help the participants to reflect on the role play questions. Ask the facilitators:
 - How did it go? How do you feel? What did you do? How did you start? What did you do next? What happened? Try to examine the entire process, recalling critical moments.
 - What went well? What was difficult? Why? People often find it difficult to encourage everybody to participate and share their ideas.

- What did you do to overcome problems? What else could you have done?
- Did the group help you or themselves? If yes, how? Did you support the group's initiatives? If not, why not? If yes, how?
- What could you do differently next time?

Ask the village group members:

- Were you able to share your ideas with the group? Did you understand the ideas of all the others?
- Did the facilitator support the group members by helping them to understand all the ideas? How did he/she do that? What helped you?
- What could she/he have done to help you more?

Ask all the participants:

- How does this simulation relate to facilitating villagers' or stakeholders' generation of ideas in reality?
 - What would be similar?
 - What would be different?
- 6 Provide your own feedback and tips for dealing with difficult group members if necessary.
 - 7 Bring the two groups together and, based on their experiences, ask them to suggest tips for preventing and handling difficult group dynamics.
 - 8 Close the session by distributing and discussing Attachment 4.6.B.

HINTS This is a good task-oriented exercise that combines all the basic facilitation skills that have already been practised, while handling difficult group dynamics.

Source: Braakmann and Edwards, 2002.

Attachment 4.6.A Role play guidelines

Facilitator

You are the facilitator of a group of villagers with whom you have already ranked the priority issues in the conflict. The issue to be worked on is the improvement of medicinal plant management in the villagers' community forest area. The aim of the meeting you are going to facilitate with the villagers is to design an experiment for achieving this end.

You want to carry out the following activities during the 30-minute meeting.

1. Share one or more case histories of experiments/observations regarding medicinal plants carried out by members of the group, discussing how they did the experiment and why they did it that way. The facilitator can identify these case histories by calling on specific group members – the medicine man, the midwife, etc. – to share their experiences.
2. Initiate a discussion to decide the following points:
 - *Design of the experiment:* Which medicinal plants will be used? What do we want to learn? What will we try out? Which variables do we want to test?
 - *Implementation:* Where do we carry out the experiment? What would be the best time? What inputs do we need?
 - *Monitoring and evaluation:* What information do we need to collect? How do we collect it? Who will do what, and when?

The following are some tips for facilitating the meeting:

- Try to get to know group members as much as possible.
- Agree on, and refer to, group norms.
- Encourage the group members to remind or challenge each other when the norms agreed on collectively are not followed.
- If the group gets stuck, diagnose the problem with the group and look for solutions collectively.
- Give constructive feedback to group members about their behaviour.
- Counsel individual group members outside the group setting, if necessary.

Dominator

You have mobilized a group of villagers to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area. As you are the medicine man of the village you know the most about medicinal plants. You have already thought through a number of experiments that you want the villagers to carry out. At the last meeting, you realized that the facilitator does not know anything about medicinal plants. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment for improving medicinal plant management with the group. As you are the expert, you will take over from her/him and manipulate the group to agree with your preferences.

Special interest pleader

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area. You joined the group because you are the village midwife and have a special interest in one particular medicinal plant called – think of a plant you are familiar with – that is becoming harder and harder to find. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment for improving medicinal plant management with the group. As you have a special interest in this plant, you will make sure that it is included in the experiment.

Initiator

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area. You joined the group because you are interested in selling medicinal plants on the market. Over the next 30 minutes the facilitator will try to design an experiment for improving medicinal plant management with the group. You know the market values of most medicinal plants in the forest, and want to share this information with the group so that it will accept your idea of experimenting only with plants that fetch good prices.

Aggressor

You are the wife of the village chief. You joined the village group that wants to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area because you heard that men in the group had dominated the last meeting. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment for improving medicinal plant management with the group. You will make sure that women's voices are heard. You will strongly oppose any men who think differently.

Topic jumper

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of your community forest area. You joined the group because you were interested in increasing mushroom production. However, you missed the last meeting, where more dominant people in the group led the decision to experiment with only medicinal plants. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment to improve medicinal plant management with the group. The only thing you want to do during this meeting is convince the facilitator that the majority of the group is not interested in medicinal plants. You will try continuously to change the subject to mushrooms. If that does not work, you will become bored of all the arguments and interrupt frequently.

Withdrawer

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area. You did not really want to join the group but your father, who is too busy himself, instructed you to do so. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment to improve medicinal plant management with the group. As you are not interested in what is going on, you will not participate in the discussion. You will show your disinterest by talking to your neighbours about other things, reading a magazine or newspaper, falling asleep or whatever else you can think of.

Opinion giver

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of medicinal plants in your community forest area. You joined the group because you often collect medicinal plants to sell to the midwife and the medicine man. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment to improve medicinal plant management with the group. You know exactly where the plants grow, why and in which season, and which plants are becoming scarcer. You want to share this information with the group.

Blocker

You are part of a village group that has decided to improve the management of your community forest area. You joined the group because you were interested in increasing fuelwood production. However, you missed the last meeting, where more dominant people in the group led the decision to experiment with only medicinal plants. Over the next 30 minutes, the facilitator will try to design an experiment to improve medicinal plant management with the group. The only thing you want to do during this meeting is convince the facilitator that the majority of the group is not interested in medicinal plants.

Attachment 4.6.B Tips for managing difficult group members

The facilitator should be able to identify both types of people: those who play destructive roles in a group and those who play constructive roles in a group. The latter can help to balance out difficult group members.

First, the types of group members whose behaviour can create difficulty in groups are listed, and options for managing them are described. Then, group members whose behaviour helps group processes are listed.

Difficult types, and possible interventions for difficult behaviour**Silent or shy**

Reward any contributions they make. Encourage them outside the group. Place them in a supportive smaller group.

The blocker

Check out their reasons for blocking. Give feedback and/or confront destructive behaviour when it happens. Set and remind them about the group norms. Support and reinforce other behaviour.

Aggressor

Seek the causes of aggression, and remove them if possible. Model non-aggressive alternatives. Discuss the effect of aggression with the whole group. Set and remind them about the group norms. Support and reinforce other behaviour.

Dominator

Record contribution levels. Place them with other similar types. Invite them to become responsible for other tasks.

Withdrawer

Search for ways of involving them: reinforce, encourage and support their contributions. Offer optional work and give responsibility. Challenge if appropriate.

Constructive types and possible interventions for constructive behaviour**Initiator**

Suggests new ideas for discussion, and different approaches to problems.

Opinion giver

States relevant beliefs about discussions, and suggests additional topics.

Builder

Builds on the suggestions of others.

Clarifier

Gives relevant examples, offers reasons, looks for meaning and understanding, and restates problems.

Tester

Raises questions to test whether the group is ready to reach a decision.

Summarizer

Reviews the discussion and pulls it together.

Devil's advocate

Challenges group members to think critically about their ideas.

Tension reliever

Uses humour or calls for breaks at appropriate times.

Compromiser

Gives in when necessary for progress.

Harmonizer

Helps keep the peace.

Encourager

Praises and supports others, and is friendly and encouraging.

Gate keeper

Keeps communication open, and encourages participation.

