ACTIVE LISTENING

In conflict, it is important to understand where each person is coming from in order to arrive at a resolution. This key skill involves uninterrupted concentration on the speaker and acknowledgement of what is being said with your body language and your words.

To implement this skill, try:
- maintaining appropriate eye contact and open posture;
- ask clarifying questions if you are unsure about what is being said or if you need more information; and
- summarize key points to check and demonstrate your understanding.

Note: you do not have to *agree* with what is being said in order to *acknowledge* it.

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Question Crafting

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Asking the right questions can help facilitate an understanding of the problem and effectively prepare individuals to work toward a solution. The answers uncover experiences, perspectives, needs which lay the foundation for problem solving.

Closed questions should be reserved for when you are seeking clarification. This is because they are questions that produce one-word answers (e.g., yes or no), which do not allow for the person to expand and narrate their story. An example of a closed question might be: *"Did that happen yesterday?"*

Consider asking **open questions** when you are first engaging in conflict as they "open" a conversation. These types of questions typically elicit what is most important to a person and allow them to tell their story. An open question might sound like: *"What happened yesterday?"*

Probing questions encourage the speaker to engage in deep thought and often evoke detailed responses. These questions facilitate your comprehension of a particular issue or subject, but also the speaker's due to the insightful nature of the questions. These types of questions are useful when you are seeking to understand how a person is thinking or feeling about something more specific. Here are a few examples of probing questions:
- *What are you hoping to accomplish?*
- *What do you think needs to change?*
- *What were your intentions behind ...?*
- *What are your expectations with respect to ...?*
- *What is the connection between ... and ...?*
- *What do you mean by ...?*
- *What is the significance of ... for you?*

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"I" Statements

"I" Statements focus on the speaker's feelings and experiences instead of the behaviours of others. These types of statements can be used to de-escalate contentious conversations or prevent them from occurring as they omit blame, which typically puts people on the defensive. De-escalating language that eliminates blame from communication fosters a problem-solving approach to conflict as it shifts the focus from the people to the problem.

"You are too noisy at night and you wake me up." vs.
"I feel my best when I am able to get uninterrupted sleep."

"You exclude me during the meetings, it's disrespectful." vs.
"I value inclusion and consultation as it makes me feel respected."

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