

Communication Skills – A Primer Reminder

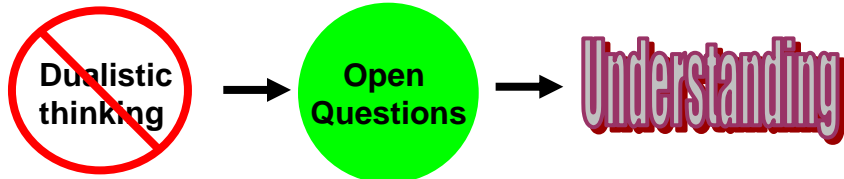
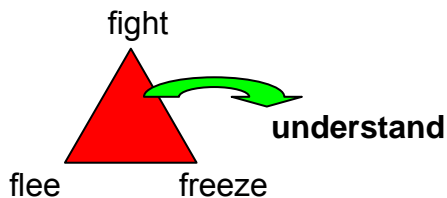
LEAD Workshop

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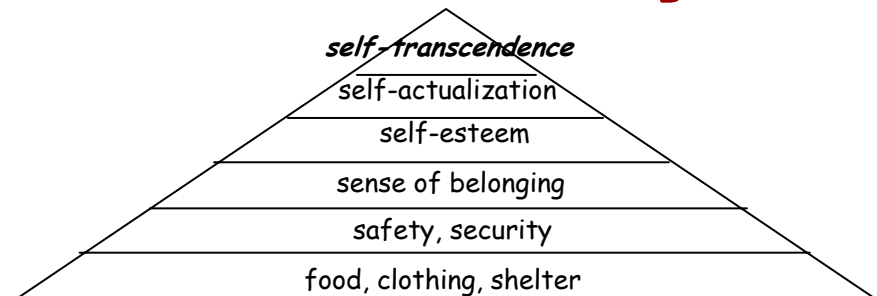
“Between stimulus and response is a space. In that space lies our power and our freedom to choose our response. In those responses lie our growth and happiness.” -- Stephen Covey

The pace and the pressure of our academic lives can help shrink the gap between stimulus and response. The following reminders will help you to be in **“the zone”** where more effective communication occurs.

Dualistic thinking (right/wrong, win/lose, good/bad thinking) increases the likelihood of **fear**. Our response to fear is to fight, flee, or freeze. **Understanding** frees us from our fear. **Open questions** are an excellent tool to increase understanding.

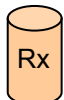


Maslow's Hierarchy



Perception and Meaning Making

We perceive and make meaning of what we experience. It is important to remember that our perception is at best an approximation of reality. (**“We see not what is but who we are.”** – Kant) By suspending our agenda and preconceived notions through open questions, we more accurately perceive what is going on and more closely approximate our meaning with what is real.



Open questions are an antibiotic for bias.

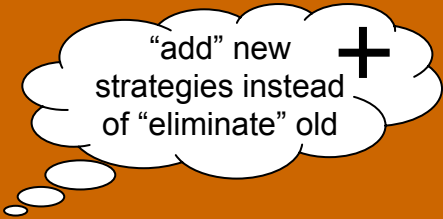
🎵 Variations on a Listening Theme 🎵

- 🎵 Listening more than telling reduces bias
- 🎵 Listening without an agenda helps people feel heard
- 🎵 Listening with stillness inside helps the invisible to feel seen
- 🎵 L-E-A-D-E-R is spelled L-I-S-T-E-N

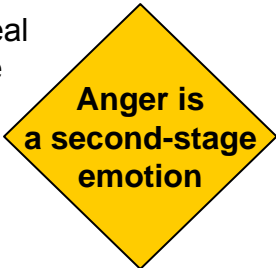


Disguised you statements are usually preceded by **“I think that you ...”** **“I feel like you ...”**

When improving communication skills, first think



Open questions eliminate the “Yes, But” conversation rhythm. They enable the speaker to reveal the complete story and the strategies they have tried, thus making your subsequent contributions more effective.



Resolve first-stage fear, hurt, sadness, loss, anticipated loss **first**, and it will cost you less.

Additional Philosophical Concepts

As we progress through the academy, it is not unusual to find people moving from the first column to the third column in the table below. The skills that we practiced at LEAD help to reinstate the original and richly resourceful states of innocence, curiosity, and compassion. This context for communication can be much more effective, creative, and synergistic.

Graduate students enter with ...	Experiences result in ...	This change gets justified as or explained as ...
Innocence →	Cynicism →	Being realistic
Curiosity →	Arrogance →	Authoritative Knowledge
Compassion →	Callousness →	Thick Skin of Experience

Adapted from Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading

“In the beginner’s mind, there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few. The beginner’s mind is the mind of compassion – when compassionate it is boundless. Then we can be true to ourselves and in solidarity with all beings.”

– Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind

The pressure & pace of our academic lives can cause us to forget what it’s like to experience something for the first time. Consistently practicing the beginner’s mind expands our awareness & compassion, keeps our perspective fresh, opens us to difference, & neutralizes the tendency towards bias. We can cultivate the beginner’s mind through the practice of the open questions & I statement skills of the LEAD workshop.

*The more still we are inside –
the more quiet our mind is,
the more we can see and understand.*

Stillness helps us see those who feel invisible and not heard. It helps us to walk in their shoes and look out through their eyes, to view the world as they experience it.