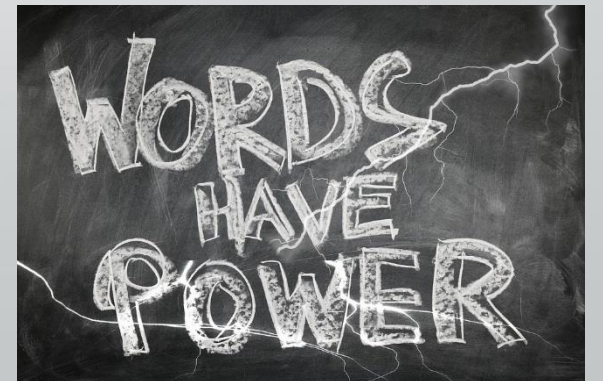


Collaborative Communication in Mentoring: Aspects and assumptions of a reflective practice model

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Session goals

Participants will

1. Become familiar with 4 of the 7 aspects of reflective practice
2. Identify examples of these aspects in mini scripts and in their own experience
3. Articulate a next step in implementing the “aspects” (also called habits)
4. Leave with practical resources

Overview of Collaborative Communication

- A form of group communication that is reflective and collaborative in nature
- Stems from traditions in *dialogue*—with emphasis on collaborative resolution rather than conflict and antipathy
- Taught at UT by emeritus professor J. Peters and rooted in social justice
- Has evolved over time to encompass work with groups who are exploring *thinking together*
- Embedded in work to create deeper levels of critical thinking and *reflective practice* about and within higher education courses

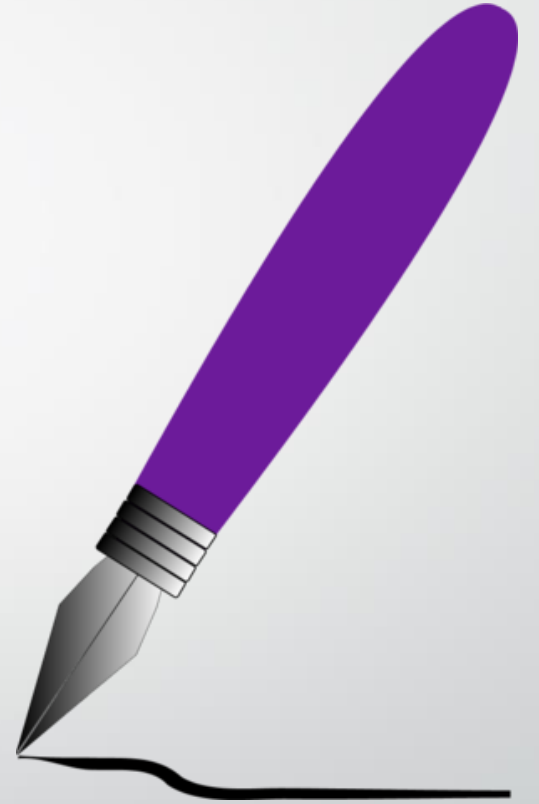
Assumptions



- Dialogue is key to reaching group understanding
- Meaning is effectively made together
- Thinking together is more
- Important to give space to reflection and spread out sessions over time

Take a minute to reflect & write

- **What communication practice have you found successful in mentoring?**



4 Key Aspects of Collaborative Communication

In your mentoring, teach and embed these practices:

1. Questioning

2. Listening

3. Focusing

4. Thinking



1. Questioning

- Asking questions that help participants identify their assumptions, clarify their thoughts, and develop fair and balanced expectations of the educational development process.
- Use phrases such as “Can you say more?” and “What is your thinking?” After answering a direct question, one might ask back “I’m curious, why did you ask that?”
- Remember to ask open-ended questions.



1. Questioning

Student: I'm having trouble with chemistry and I'm going to drop it. I think I'm going to change my minor. It just doesn't seem right for me. How do I go about changing my minor?

Mentor: The process is easy; I can explain how to do it. First, could you tell me more about what doesn't feel right?

What other open-ended questions you could use?

2. Listening



- Pay full attention to participants' mental models, wants, assumptions, and values.
- *"Listening is one of the highest forms of caring"*
- Are you listening or just preparing to speak?
- Guidelines: Be fully present to what others are saying. Avoid "reloading" (thinking about what you're going to say next). Ask a question encouraging others to share more of their thoughts. Hear people into speech.

2. Listening

Student: I can't do it. I just can't go on.

Mentor: Would you want to tell me more about what's going on?

Student: I can't do the work. I don't even know where to start. I can't concentrate.

Mentor: Describe a time recently when you felt this very strongly. What was the context?

How else could you use "hear the student into speaking?"

3. Focusing

- *Do you ever have unfocused conversations?*
- Focusing: seeing, hearing, and tracking what each participant says and how they say it, moment to moment, individually and jointly.
- Can you remember back (listening for the sequence of the discussion—can you go seven people back and remember what they said)?



3. Focusing

- **Students:** The conversation starts with discussions of dropping classes and retaking them. It moves to problems with classes and as it continues, you hear details about problems: “I am always late to my 8 a.m. class,” “I don’t have time to finish my calculus homework on time,” “I just can’t stay awake in Western Civ.!” “No one makes interesting comments in my discussion board.”
- **Mentor:** after tracking the conversation first, you call a “time out.” Ask, “what are we talking about here?” “What is the X, the central topic that is emerging from our conversation?” “What are some common elements to what we are saying?”

4. Thinking



- Identify and suspend our assumptions, values, and biases, in order to **understand** viewpoints and behaviors. Our own and others'.
- Guidelines: check one's own assumptions, check each other's assumptions through questions: can you say more about that? can you tell me why?

4. Thinking

- **Student:** I'm not sure what I should do. Should I do the internship now or the summer job? The money would be nice.
- **Mentor:** Think about the advantages of each option.
- **Students list pros and cons for each**
- **Mentor:** What personal value does each one speak to in you?" or "Given your long-term goals, which one seems to be better now?" or "What assumptions are you making if you choose _____?"

How might you then promote thinking together as a group?



Wrapping up (part of Facilitation)

- Each participant is invited to make a concluding statement about the session.
- Helps participants see how people interpret communication differently.
- Ask “what was this session like for you”? Or “What are taking away from this conversation?”

Putting it together

- Read through the script (handout) & label the following:
 - **Asking back**
 - **Open-ended questions**
 - **Overtly teaching skills**
 - **Thinking**
 - **Wrapping up**
- Look at what you wrote earlier. How does it relate to this topic?

Next step:
Write 1 thing you plan to do very soon

- Read more about _____
- Talk with someone about _____
- Practice doing _____
- Other _____

