Quick Training Tips

**Pick-A-Listening-Card**

**Focus:** Communication Skills, Team Building

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Objectives:**

1. Improve participant’s ability to function as a team member
2. Encourage objective, orderly discussion
3. Enhance participants’ communication skills

**Materials needed:**

1. Copies of Listening Cards (enough to distribute one card per person)

**Introduction:**

Successful people, and successful teams have the ability to communicate effectively. Listening skills may be the most crucial because in order to collaborate and accomplish goals, team members must be able to hear and comprehend what each other is saying and intending. Effective listening is challenging, in part, because people are more often focused on people listening to their message rather than the message(s) that they themselves are receiving. Typically, senders think their message is more important than the receiver does. However, with a little work, everyone can improve their listening skills. Some important techniques to focus on are:

- Concentrate on what others are saying instead of thinking about what you will say next.
- Maintain eye contact to send the nonverbal message that you are listening.
- Listen to the entire message before making an evaluation.
- Avoid getting defensive in your reply.
- Practice paraphrasing what the other person has said to clarify any misunderstandings.
- Listen and observe non-verbal language for clues on the other person’s feelings.
- Ask questions to clarify meaning and intent.

**Directions:**

1. Ask each participant to select one card from deck.
2. Each participant will read the card silently.
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3. Each participant will utilize the suggestions on the card for communication throughout the rest of the meeting. When using a phrase or question from their card, the participant should state, “I am using a communication tip from my card,” and then proceed with the question or statement suggested by the card.

4. Allow five minutes at the end of the meeting to discuss the following points.

Discussion Questions:

1. Were the communication suggestions helpful to you in listening actively, encouraging others, and including others during the team meeting?
2. How did you feel when your peers made comments or asked questions that were suggested by the cards?
3. What suggestion did you find most valuable and/or useful?
4. Will you utilize any of these tips in future meetings? Future conversations?
5. How does this type of communication help build better team/departmental relations? Personal relations?

Reference: Adapted from: Beans, I. (2002). InterAct. HRDQ, PA
INCLUDE OTHERS

Invite people to join the conversation by asking quiet members for their input.

**Say Things Like:**

I’m concerned that we haven’t heard from everyone.

(Name), I would love to hear your thoughts on this.

I’ve noticed that you haven’t had a chance to express an opinion about...

ENCOURAGE OTHERS

Support a point made by another group member and point out the merits of his or her idea. Show appreciation for the effort another member has made.

**Say Things Like:**

I think you’ve added a significant point.

What I like about your idea is...

Thanks for your suggestion.

LISTEN ACTIVELY

Pay careful attention to what someone is saying. Make eye contact, be attentive, and look interested. Repeat the main points to demonstrate understanding.

Say Things Like:

That’s interesting. Tell us more.

Are you saying…?

Here is what I think you are saying...

CHECK PROGRESS

Determine how the group stands in relation to achieving its goal.

Say Things Like:

Let’s stop and take a look at how we’re doing.

Are we making progress toward achieving our goal?

How is our pace with this project/goal? (rushed, okay, dragging)
TEST FEELINGS

Check on how people feel things are going.

Say Things Like:

I’m feeling ____ right now, and I’ wondering if anyone feels the same way.

How’s everyone feeling about our progress?

Would you like to tell us how you are feeling?

MAINTAIN GROUP FOCUS

Make the group aware any time it has gone off task. Help the group decide whether to keep discussing the new topic or get back to the original agenda item.

Say Things Like:

I see that we’ve moved on to a new topic. Is this what we want to discuss now?

How long do we want to devote to this topic? Who can act as a timekeeper?

How can we accelerate this conversation while maintaining focus?
HARMONIZE DIFFERING OPINIONS

Reconcile disagreements by pointing out areas of agreement. Help the parties identify what separates them and what would bring them closer to agreement.

Say Things Like:

Although you two disagree, I’ve noticed that you are both saying essentially the same thing about...

Your main differences seem to be...

What would it take for either of you to accept the other’s suggestion?

CONDUCT INTERVENTIONS

Draw the group’s attention to any problems that need to be corrected. Describe what you see and suggest specific behaviors or actions to correct the situation.

Say Things Like:

I’ve noticed that...(describe the problem, e.g. people keep coming and going from the meeting; people arrive late to the meeting, etc.)

I’m concerned that...(describe the impact, e.g. we won’t finish all of our agenda)

I suggest that we...(suggest corrective action, e.g. all make a commitment to stay to the end).

Reference: Adapted from: Beans, I. (2002). InterAct. HRDQ, PA