5. Skills advanced listening
5.1 CREATE A CLIMATE OF CONFIDENCE: Trust Defined

Mutual trust is a shared belief that you can depend on each other to achieve a common purpose. More comprehensively trust defined as "the willingness of a party (trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee will perform an action important to the trustor, regardless of the trustor's ability to monitor or control the trustee." "People sense how you feel about them. If you want to change their attitudes toward you, change the negative attitudes you have toward them." Building relationships requires the building of trust. Trust is the expectancy of people that they can rely on your word. It is built through integrity and consistency in relationships.

> *"Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in* **effective communication***. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships." ~ Stephen Covey*

Effective Listening: The Bottom Line of Trust

If you **listen well** people will trust you. "You cannot establish trust if you cannot listen. A conversation is a relationship. Both speaker and listener play a part, each influencing the other. Instead of being a passive recipient, the listener has as much to do in shaping the conversation as the speaker"

Eye Contact

There's an old myth if you won't look at me I can't trust you. It might be true, might be not. But if they believe it, it's true!

Rapport

Rapport is a process of building a sustaining relationship of mutual trust, harmony and understanding. It is essentially meeting individuals in their model of the world. Rapport starts with acceptance of the other person's point of view, their state and their style of communication.

Same Reality, Different Perceptions

This happens through matching the accessing cues from words, eye movements and body language. Rapport is the ability to be on the same wavelength and to connect mentally and emotionally. It is the ability to join people where they are

in order to build a climate of trust and respect. Having rapport does not mean that you have to agree, but that you understand where the other person or people are coming from.

Managing Cultural Differences

Cultural differences play a key role in the creation of trust, since trust is built in different ways, and means different things in different cultures.

Trust-based Working Relationships

Trust has an important link with your organizational success. "Trust elevates levels of commitment and sustains effort and performance without the need for management controls and close monitoring."[4] Trust between a manager and an employee is based on the trustor's perception of the trustee ability, benevolence, and integrity.

Building Trust in Global Virtual Teams

In global virtual teams, when your team is not in one building but all over the globe, you must build trust differently. "Trust takes on a whole new meaning in virtual teams. When you meet your workmates by the water cooler or photocopier every day, you know instinctively who you can and cannot trust. In a geographically distributed team, trust is measured almost exclusively in terms of reliability," says Erin Meyer from INSEAD.

Trust as a Source of Competitive Advantage

Trust-based working relationships are an important source of your **sustainable competitive advantage** because trust is valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and often non substitutable. The level of trust a **leader** is able to garner from his/her employees is contingent upon the employee's perceptions of the leader's ability, benevolence, and integrity. A study that was conducted to determine whether trust could be a source of competitive advantage showed that trust is significantly related to sales, profits, and turnover. More broadly, the study concluded that "the ability of a **general manager** to earn higher trust from her or his employees likely creates a competitive advantage for a firm over its rivals."

5.2 Focus on the solution: Three of the biggest hindrances to helping others are the helper's tendency to: (1) be judgmental (2) begin with preconceived notions; (3) "know" what is best for the helpee.

Professionals and non-professionals alike are notorious for thinking we know how to run other people's lives better than they do. In actuality, we do not have a clue! Thus enters Solution Focus. Solution Focus discards these roadblocks and begins from a position of Not Knowing. The helper is not the authority on the life of the helpee. The helpee is the expert of his/her own life. Solution Focus recognizes and respects this truth. "Not Knowing" is a term first coined by Anderson and Goolishian and supports the contention that helpers do not have a priori knowledge of the importance of the helpee's world of experiences and behaviors.

Therefore, the helper must rely on the helpee's perception and explanations. The helper puts forth every effort to enter into the helpee's frame of reference. Helper's adopt a stance of curiosity, of not knowing, yet desiring to be informed by the helpee. This is not easy to do which is why so few actually do it. It is difficult primarily because helpers have an almost unconquerable tendency to believe they know what is best for others. It takes practice and commitment to allow others to be the experts of their own lives and to solve challenges within the framework of their own strengths. It is a continuous skill building process.

Useful Solution Focus Skills - Dynamic Listening

Good listening is an essential part of being a successful Solution Focus (referred to as SF) helper. You must be very aware of the feedback you are receiving from the people around you. It might be added that being a good listener is a skill important in many other settings. For example, being a good listener will enhance your social relationships of all types, marriage, dating, parties, work, etc. But, be warned, it is hard work.

Dynamic listening means listening actively and not just hearing the words being spoken. This is important to any communications and paramount to SF intervention. Dynamic listening involves sensitivity and the ability to perceive and listen to others as persons who are unique, have needs and emotions as well as strengths and skills. It is being able to listen from the client's perspective, experience, or point of view, rather than your own.

This is difficult I agree, but not impossible. Anyone can improve their listening capacity through purposeful effort. Most people have what it takes to be a good

listener. Good listening includes a package of skills, which requires knowledge of technique and practice very similar to good writing or good speaking. Many people believe that good listening skills are easy to learn or automatically part of every person's personality. Neither is correct. I am certain that you have experienced occasions when you have asked someone, "Are you listening to me?"

Poor listening habits are very common. Actually, poor listening skills are more common than poor speaking skills. Have you noticed situations when two or more people talking to each other at the same time? People cannot talk and be an effective listener simultaneously. There is shallow listening and deep listening. Shallow or superficial listening is all too common on the job and many other settings.

Most of us have learned how to give the appearance of listening while not really listening. Even less obvious is when the message received is different from the one sent. We did not really understand the message. We listened, but we did not get the intended message. We heard, but we missed the context. Can you recall times when you knew the person supposedly listening to you, did not have a clue as to what you were really attempting to convey. Such failed communications are the consequences of poor speaking, poor listening and/or poor understanding.

Good listening skills will vary from one communications situation to the next. For example, what is effective feedback for one may be different for another. Some people to whom you are listening may need more feedback than other people. Listening skills can always be improved because perfection in listening, just as in other communications skills, does not really exist.

It cannot be emphasized too often that listening is vital to effective communication, yet we don't always do it well enough. Listening is more than just hearing until the other person has stopped making noise so we can share our thoughts or agenda with them! Joan Rivers made famous the cliché, Can we talk? This is what most people do. Talk. Talking is fine if that is all you want to do and all the other person expects from you. But if you are interested in learning and understanding and helping, dynamic listening skills are crucial. Active listening involves MUCH more than talk! To be effective in our SF communication, we really need to master the skills of "dynamic listening."

5.3 If people are going to be productive and successful, they must be able to identify and resolve conflict successfully. Conflict management is a skill that can be learned.

The human relationship is a complex and dynamic interaction. As living creatures, we need and crave the opportunity to interact with other humans by speaking, listening, and spending time with them. Most of this interaction tends to be mutual and cordial. Yet, at times, the interaction can be laced with tension and discord. If left alone, the tension can lead to conflict that may damage the relationship or even become volatile.

Conflict between individuals and within groups often occurs because people have differences of opinion, have different values and goals, or receive inaccurate information. Conflict is not always a bad thing. In many cases, conflict can lead to a better understanding of and response to issues. Conflict also can lead to creative problem solving and the initiation of innovative ideas. However, if conflict is suppressed and not addressed, it can lead to distrust and greater discord within the group.

For a community group to be productive and successful, group members and leaders need to be able to identify, address, and resolve conflict successfully. Like any other leadership skill, conflict management can be learned. The overall goal for conflict management is to find common ground (mutual goals and interests that all parties share) within the issue and use that as the foundation for resolution.

Effective conflict management flows from three factors:

- Recognizing that conflict exists
- Setting criteria for effective management
- Choosing a strategy that matches the situation

Successful conflict management also assumes three essential components:

- **Conflicts are a normal part of life.** It is not the presence or absence of conflict that determines the health of a community. What matters is how conflict, when it arises, is managed.

- **Not all conflicts can be resolved, but most can be successfully managed.** Conflicts exist because there are differences of value and opinion. In some instances, people may never reach agreement. However, even these conflicts can be managed in ways that allow people to work together on other issues on which they do agree.

- **You are part of the equation.** Conflict requires two or more people. Remember, you are the only person that you can control. You can influence others but not fix them or control them.

When a conflict does arise, it is critical for the group (or the group leader) to address the situation quickly. Do not let conflict fester — it won't go away and it won't fix itself. Conflict is extremely difficult to address once emotion and history are attached to it.

Sometimes, trying to identify the true source of conflict can be difficult. We know that a person(s) is not in agreement with another person(s), but why? Is it a matter of perception, opinion, or a difference in values?

Good conflict management asks the following three questions to accurately identify the source of conflict between individuals or groups of people:

1. **Are our respective goals for this project incompatible?** If so, why?

2. **What are the key arguments each person has on this issue?** Remember that labeling other people in negative ways and blaming them can cloud the ability to identify the root causes of a conflict. Look for the issue — not at the people involved or their personalities.

3. **What are the consequences of this conflict?** Consider how the conflict affects you, the other people involved, the community.

Once the true source of conflict is identified, it must be managed. A well-managed conflict will allow the individuals and/or groups involved to maintain (and maybe increase) their social capital with each other. In most cases, signs that a conflict is being well-managed include the following and should be considered as high priorities in the resolution process:

- The people involved do not lose their sense of self-worth. This means that the process used to solve the conflict and the resulting actions do not cause those involved to lose their self-respect or the respect they have for the other person.

- **The conflict stays focused on the issue.** Do not let conflicts become personal attacks. Conflicts should always remain focused on behaviors or actions — not on who someone is, their personality, or the emotions being

expressed. Likewise, keep the conflict focused on current issues — not something that happened previously.

- **The interests of the partners in the conflict are identified, acknowledged, and taken into account.** The issue in a conflict is most often about an incompatibility of goals. However, people often have interests in a conflict that go beyond the issue. These matter greatly to those involved and it likely affects their behavior during the conflict. For example, the fear of losing self-esteem, worries about what others will say, concerns about violating a value or principle. Often these interests are the underlying reason for the situation — the "why" of the conflict — and they generate more energy and emotion than the issue itself.

The worksheet on the next page will help you identify the true source of conflict and assist in the identification of strategies for resolving that conflict.

Four Strategies for Managing Conflict

Few conflicts can be managed with only one strategy. Effective community leaders do not depend on a "one size fits all" approach. In fact, they seek a variety of options — depending upon the situation.

Every conflict involves two factors. First, conflicts are between people who are linked in some way — they are interdependent and have some type of relationship with each other. Secondly, conflicts occur when there are incompatible goals, meaning that in every conflict, there is an issue.

When managing a conflict, consider these two factors and ask how they play out in the situation.

Factors in Choosing a Conflict Management Strategy

RELATIONSHIP

- What is our relationship? (friend, fellow committee member, spouse, co-worker)

- How important is this relationship to me?

ISSUE

- What is the issue (the focus of the incompatible goals)?

- How important is the issue to me?

Now, chart your responses on the following grid. The grid will help identify some immediate strategies for the named conflict — though you may consider other strategies based on your comfort level and the evolution of the conflict.

Named Strategies:

Avoidance:

With this strategy, you simply stay away from the other person or groups involved in the conflict. The conflict remains un-named and no effort is made to resolve it.

This can be a useful short term strategy if:

- time is needed to calm down before discussing the issue, and

- a desire to avoid the situation exists because there is not a way to manage it.

Overuse of this conflict management tool can result in others seeing you or the group as uncaring and uninvolved.

Accommodation:

In this strategy, one of the conflict partners "gives in" on the issue so that the relationship can be maintained or enhanced. In this strategy, the conflict is named, and while one of the partners may disagree with the other's position, the importance of the relationship outweighs the need to take a firm stand.

The risk of this strategy is that the individual (or group) who relinquishes his or her position may be seen as a "doormat" — someone who will not stand up for what he or she believes in.

Competition:

In this strategy, winning the position is more important than the relationship. Competition can be valid in value-driven conflicts that affect the community. However, remember to focus competition on the issue and not on the personality of

the other person or group. The goal is not to make that person or group a loser, but rather to gain what is most important to you.

People or groups that overuse this strategy often compete on relatively minor issues and feel that they must win no matter what. As a result, they run the risk of "winning the battle but losing the war" within the community.

Compromise:

In this strategy, those involved in the conflict give up some components that matter to them, but they don't give up everything. Both parties involved win some and lose some on the issue.

In this strategy, it can be difficult to determine the acceptable level of wins and losses and negotiate them. For this to work, both parties must see the wins and losses as fair, even if they are not equal. Be honest about what wins are needed and what losses will be tolerated.