



Introduction to Communication & Active Listening

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

BWBR Description: *Bonner Curriculum workshop helps participants develop communication and active listening skills.*

Overview:

This workshop engages participants in looking at the fundamentals of conflict resolution through interactive activities related to communication and active listening. Participants identify issues related to communication and conflict, typical scenarios, and tackle some scenarios in role plays. It may be a good workshop to do with students/program participants if issues of conflict are happening in the group, then followed by the second workshop at a later date.

This workshop can be followed by Conflict Resolution: Steps for Handling Interpersonal Dynamics

Category:

Communication; active listening; leadership skills; teamwork and conflict resolution

Level:

Introductory, especially good for first or second year students



slated for freshmen or sophomores

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants engage in communication activities that surface issues involved with communication or conflict

- Participants identify typical conflicts that happen in the program/context.
- Participants role play ways of communicating to address conflicts

Materials:

- Flip chart and markers
- Copies of included handouts

How to Prepare:

Review the trainer guide. Prepare handouts.

Review and modify scenarios to fit purpose and activities of participants.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This 60-minute workshop is built around highly interactive elements. The components include:

1) Welcome and Introduction	suggested time 5 minutes
2) Warm Up: Stand Up/Sit Down	suggested time 5 minutes
3) Warm Up: Switch-Aroo	suggested time 5 minutes
4) Brainstorming Definitions	suggested time 10 minutes
5) Case Study Role Plays	suggested time 25 minutes
6) Discussion/Wrap	suggested time 10 minutes

Part 1) Welcome and Introduction

Suggested time 5 minutes

Start by introducing yourself. You may want to use a story or anecdote, involving an issue of conflict (but make it on the light side) to introduce this workshop. You can review reasons for doing this workshop, and connect it to general communication and facilitation skills.

Part 2) Stand Up Sit Down

Suggested time 5 minutes

Lead off with a warm up called Stand Up/Sit Down. Explain that the way it works is that you will read a statement. If a participant's response/answer to the question is "yes" then stand up. Stay standing until you say "thank you" (about

5 seconds). Instruct people to look around and see who else is standing. Tell them to do this exercise silently. Only the facilitator speaks.

Stand up if (you can alter these if you want, but try to weave in some about communication):

- You like playing a sport?
- You brushed your teeth this morning?
- You have ever been in a fight?
- You have one very close friend?
- You have ever spread or passed on a rumor?
- You think that people often get hurt in the context of regular activities because of miscommunication?
- You have been a target of gossiping or misinformation?
- You worry that communicating on social media platforms also can cause miscommunication?

Thank the group for answering these questions and being willing to share their answers in a non-verbal way with each other.

Part 3) Switch-Aroo: Can We Communicate?

Suggested time 15 minutes

Ask for two volunteers from the team.

Set up two chairs facing each other in the middle of the circle. Then explain:

- You are going to give them a topic and each volunteer has to defend the opinion that he or she is given for a minute or two. Both people talk at the same time.
- Then when the leader says freeze, stop talking. You will be asked to switch sides of the debate and argue the other perspective for another minute or two. Switching should be done 2-3 times per pair.
- Topics to debate: (You set one; these can be changed, but keep them connected to the themes of the workshop).
- Conflict is good because... vs. conflict is bad because.
- All you need to do is to forgive a person to resolve a conflict... vs. resolving a conflict is more challenging than just forgiving someone.
- Showing feelings is a sign of weakness... vs. showing feelings is a sign of strength.

Pick a new pair for every new debate.

Debrief this exercise by asking the following questions:

- What skills were required to successfully do this activity?
- Is this effective communication? Why? Why not?
- What is easy and hard about this exercise?
- What does this activity reveal about communication or conflict?

Part 4) Brainstorm Definitions of Conflict

Suggested time 10 minutes

Lead the group in a brainstorm on flipchart paper or private brainstorming (using index cards or post its). Focus on the possible sources or scenarios of conflict.

Scenarios might include:

bullying/name calling;
rumors;
taking of belongings/theft;
borrowing money;
run-ins;
accusations;
no supplies/resources;
trying to impress others/peer pressure;
talking behind people's back;
organizing against a member of a team

After you have created the list, pick a few answers that you would like them to clarify and/or explain.

Ask the group:

- What are conflicts?
- How do you know if you are in a conflict? What are the signs?
- What are the characteristics of a conflict?

End by providing a definition of conflict on Flipchart paper and review it.

- *Conflict: a mental and/or physical disagreement in which people's values or needs are in opposition to each or they think that they are opposed*

Part 5) Freeze Action Role Play

Suggested time 25 minutes

Series of three: Preparation (2 minutes) and Freeze Action Role Plays (5 minutes)

- In small groups of 3, have each small team, prepare a role play about one of the conflicts in their work. It could be a conflict at service site, Bonner Program, school, dorm, or class.
- The goal of this exercise is to get participants to practice thinking on their feet while in a conflict about how to respond to the situation. The goal is not necessarily to resolve the conflict, but to explore what the problem is and identify exactly what the conflict is and has become.
- Explain that a group of three is going to start out the role play. Then the facilitator is going to say "Freeze" after one minute or so and the actors must stop immediately and freeze mid-sentence in whatever physical position they are in.
- Once "frozen," the facilitator will ask for a volunteer to replace one of the characters of his/her choice. Once this is done, and the replaced actor has sit down, then the role play will continue for another minute.
- Continue the role play again, asking the actors to freeze one more time, replacing a character again and then continuing.
- Stop the role play even if the conflict isn't resolved.

Part 6) Discussion

Suggested time 10 minutes

End with some discussion about what has occurred during the workshop/role plays. Some Questions for the discussion:

- What did you learn about conflicts today?
- What did you learn about the role of communication in conflicts?
- Why are conflicts common in our lives?
- What is challenging about overcoming conflicts?
- How do you feel when in a conflict?
- What happens to your body (physical reactions) specifically or in general when in a conflict?

