

Spring Artifacts

Discussion Board Post – Week 3 – Dialogic Decision Making

In week three of this course, our assignment was to complete a seminar designed to explore challenging workplace situations and how they should be confronted. This assignment was completed alone by me and was intended to show what we learned from the seminar. The seminar took about two and a half hours to complete and then reflect on the question below to demonstrate learning outcomes.

Why is it important to accurately view a difficult interaction through the other person's perspective? What techniques did you use (or could you have used) to ensure that you were actively listening to the other party's story?

It is always important to view difficult interactions from the other person's perspective to gain insight into their behavior. You never know what someone else is going through, so you must always consider that before going into a difficult conversation. We learned in the seminar about Positions and Interests. Positions are WHAT the parties say they want, and interests are WHY they want it. The differences in perceptions, motivations, and work styles also are essential to acknowledge when trying to see things from someone else perspective. Perception is about what is important. Motivation and intentions vary by person, as do work style and communication style. Because everyone operates differently, it is important to be aware of these differences. This leads to a better understanding of various factors contributing to problematic interaction with another person. It is also a good idea to recognize the way people like to be communicated to. While someone may prefer in-person interactions, others may prefer the written form. Communicating to people in the way they prefer can provide a better way to approach a difficult interaction. Because everyone has unconscious biases, being aware can prevent biases from clouding judgment or fueling the conflict to make it worse.

When I had to have this difficult interaction, I tried to put myself in the other person's shoes and their current workload. The topic of my conversation was "missed deadlines." During this time, I worked as a Business Analyst and was project managing a data conversion. Missed deadlines meant an increase in the budget because of the overtime the consultants had to work. I knew it would be a complicated conversation, but it needed to happen. As the Project Manager, I was responsible for delivering the project on time and hopefully under budget.

The techniques for active listening I use(d) were:

Full Attention: I did not schedule this on a Monday morning or a Friday afternoon. This is when people usually are not as engaged as other times throughout the week. I wanted to have full attention from both parties.

Ask Clarifying Questions: It is always good to ask the other party open-ended questions and get them talking. This way, I can be an active listener and respond accordingly.

Phrases like "tell me more about that" or "how does that make you feel" are good places to start.

Affirming Signals: Body language is vital to understanding how the conversation is going. Things like smiling and nodding to show the connection with the other person is a great way to know you are on the same page and there is shared meaning.

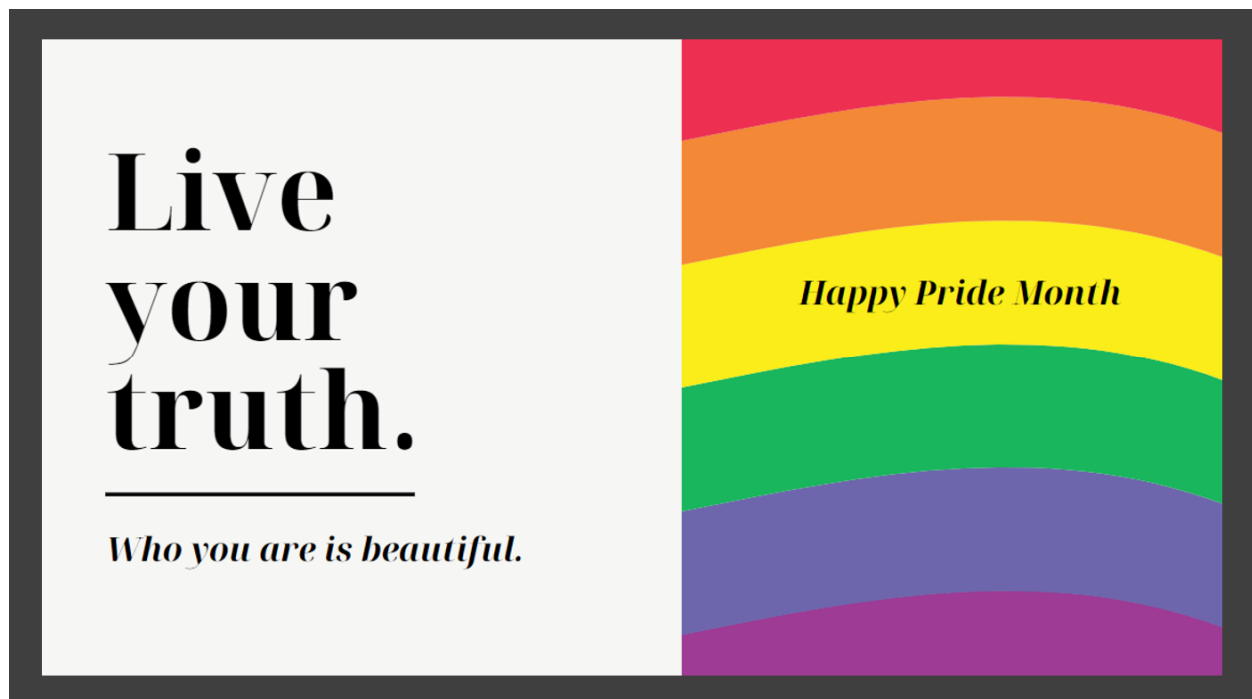
Paraphrasing: I love this technique and use it ALL the time. Repeating back to someone what you heard them say in your own words confirms understanding. This action shows the other party you are engaged and listening intently.

Setting the meeting during the right time with the right expectations allowed us to have meaningful interaction and get back on the same page. This meeting created a better understanding between us. Coming together and talking through difficult issues in the project gave us a greater awareness of the other person's responsibilities – both at work and at home. As a result, my project was delivered on time!

Week 5 – Dialogic Decision Making

We focused on dysfunction analysis during week five and what changes require conversations. This conversation was great timing because I was designing culturally relevant materials at work to display on the flat-screen monitors in all of our locations globally. I used my knowledge from this program to cultivate my message. Below is a slide I designed acknowledging Pride month in June. I produced it to promote and show inclusivity to our workforce. After I displayed the slide, I received a message from a coworker expressing her emotions about finally feeling included and finally seen. Designing this communication solidified why I do what I do for employee engagement and internal communications.

Slide:



Message:

OMG, I love this. Of all the years, I've been at the company, this is the first that I've ever seen this. I've been with my partner since 1998 and most people that know me here are aware of this. So, this warms my heart. I never got a chance to post photos of my kids births in the newsletter because, well, you know.

In Residence 3 - Managing Complexity + Elegant Communication

During InRes3 Professor Michelle Buck, Clinical Professor of Leadership from Kellogg, gave a lecture on Leading with Vision and Purpose. It was about how we want to lead and what our story is. I used the skills I learned from the data visualization class and this framework to draw upon my experiences as I sat down to write my long bio. I wanted to be intentional with my story. What do I want people to know? How do I want to be seen? How can my story help me relate to the people I know and will come to know? The following is what I developed by applying the techniques I learned from the lecture.



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Karen knew from an early age how important it was to be understood. As the youngest of three siblings, and one half of a twin, there were times communication was not always clear. "Growing up, I recognized the importance of being heard and quickly learned how to use my voice to help myself and others around me." Raised as a latchkey kid in a hard-working middle-class family, Karen understood how valuable her communication skills were. "If I wanted something, I had to speak up. Nothing came easy."

Her career took a little longer to play out than most. She did not take the typical path of a four-year university after high school like her twin sister. Karen spent her early adult years raising her son as a single mom. She learned what hard work really meant and made sure her son had all the tools he needed to succeed. Determination, grit, and work ethic shaped her mindset, and she never looked back.

After Karen's son graduated college, she decided it was her turn to fulfill her dream of achieving a college degree. Deciding to go back to school as an adult while working full-time was not for the faint of heart. She set a goal, and nothing was going to stop her. Karen received her Bachelor of Arts in business management and organizational development and leadership from Loyola University Chicago and her Master of Science in communication from Northwestern University. She is also a certified Project Manager and holds a professional certification from the Project Management Institute (PMI).

Setting her son up for success by establishing goals was where her love for coaching and mentoring flourished. Developing him and teaching him how to communicate effectively laid the foundation for becoming the highly-motivated, passionate, servant leader and communicator she is today.

Karen's expertise in leading cross-functionally in the C-Suite, IT, and HR spaces has allowed her to apply her real-world skills with evidence-based learning from academia. Her skillset comes naturally as an arranger, dot connector, and influencer. She believes every message needs a "WHY" to leverage the power of personalization.

A self-professed lifelong learner, Karen is always looking for ways to develop personally and professionally. When she is not in learning mode, she enjoys perfecting her cookie recipes, working out, and spending time with her family.