



Key Elements of a Successful Supervision Relationship

***OneJustice Executive Fellowship Program
September 18, 2026***

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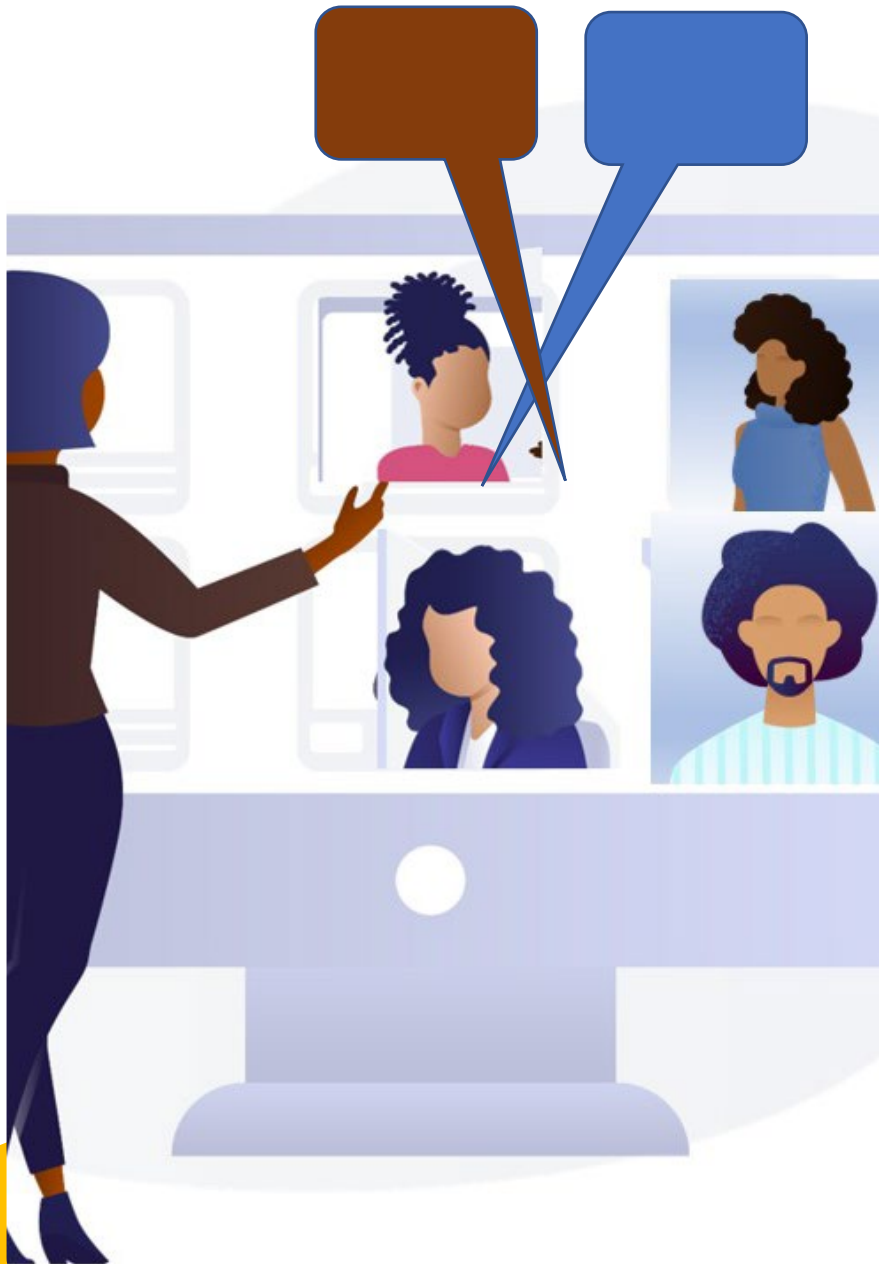
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Agenda Review

- Agenda Review
 - Qualities of Successful Supervision Relationship
 - Performance Management Eco-System and Supervision Framework
 - (Concept and Skill) Engaged Listening Activity
 - Supervision Framework – Expectation Setting
 - Performance Feedback
 - Coaching Skills (Listening with Inquiry)
 - Close & Commitments



What makes a supervision relationship successful?

Reflect on your supervision relationships (either as a supervisor or supervisee).

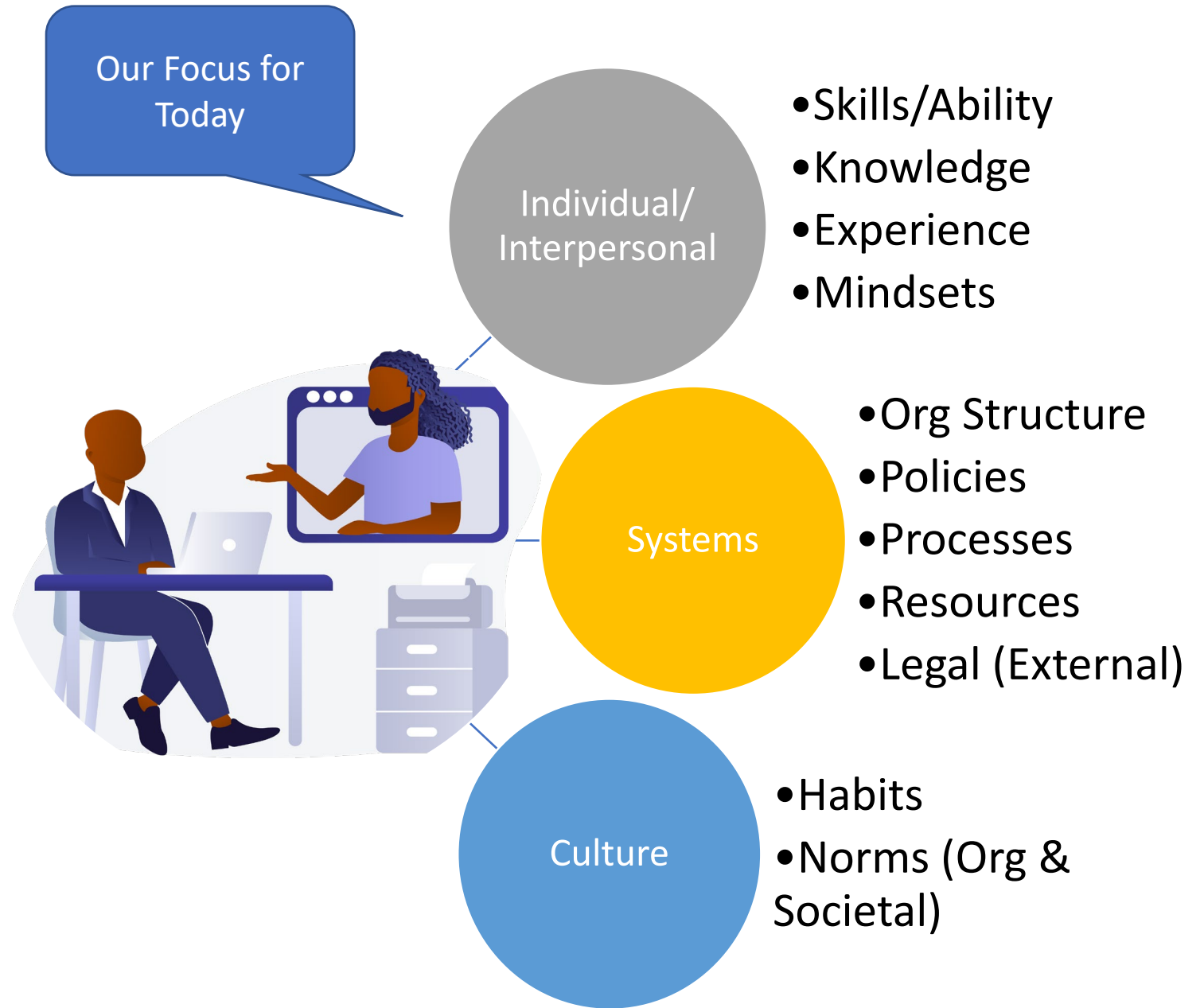
Small Group Share and Discuss

- **What supervisor qualities do you think make for a successful supervision relationship?**
- **What are some things supervisors do to make that relationship successful?**

Jot down the qualities and behaviors on your virtual flip chart (the Google Doc).

Performance Management “Eco System”

Factors that
Impact Our
Supervision
Relationships



A few words on system and culture and the origins of our supervision structures

Current models of most organizations and supervision are based on extraction, domination, privilege/power for order and rule.

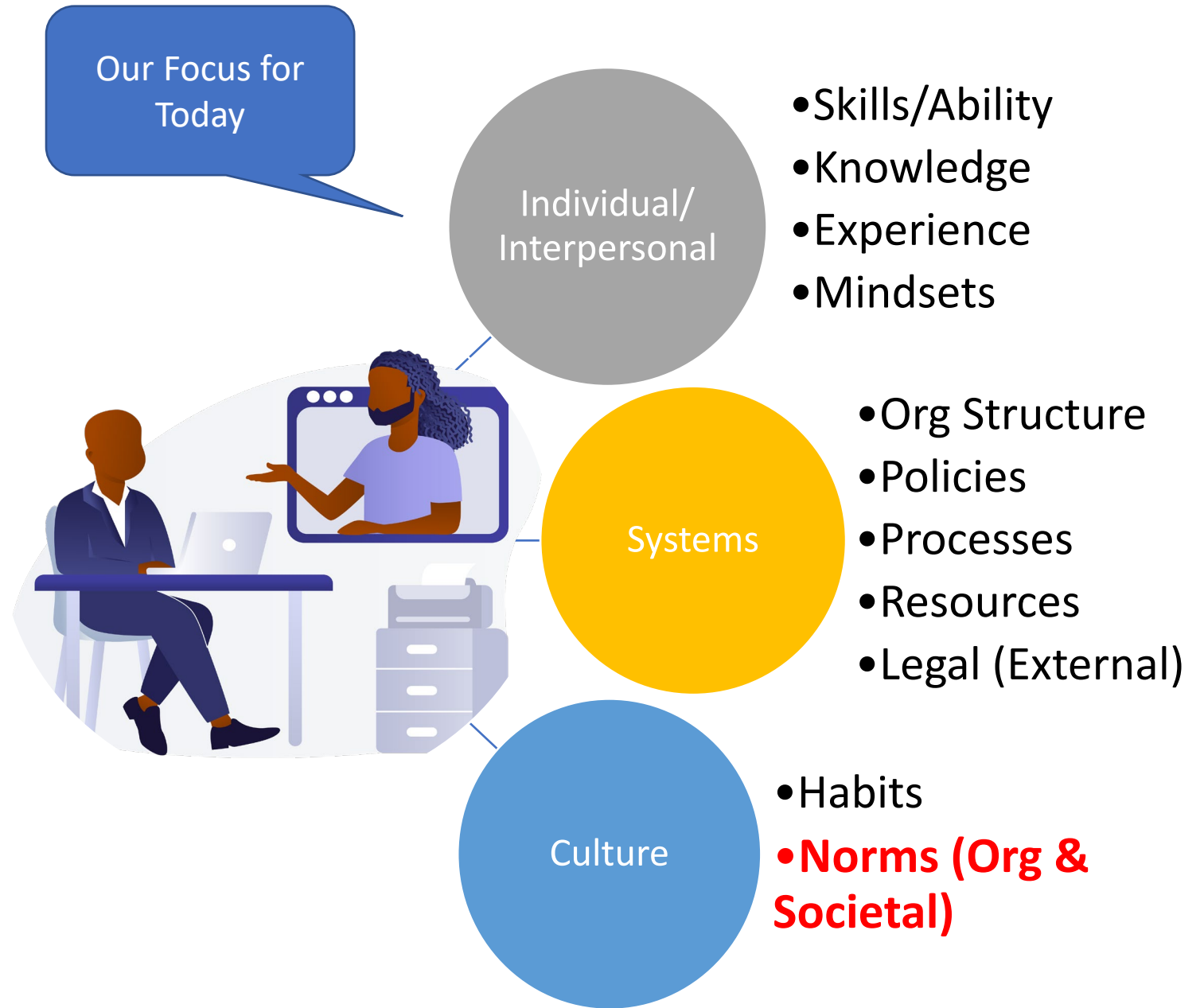
“ . . . the ways in which supervisors or managers engage with employees to get work done—is rooted in the soil of plantations rather than the dust and debris of the factory floor.”

- Caitlin Rosenthal

Harvard University Press catalog page, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* by Caitlin Rosenthal; and see Caitlin Rosenthal, “Plantations Practiced Modern Management,” *Harvard Business Review*, September 2013.

Performance Management “Eco System”

Factors that
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Key elements of a successful supervision relationship

Expectation Setting

- Guidance and direction
- Work-planning
- Job roles/descriptions
- Delegation
- Assignments
- Goal Setting
- Onboarding
- Processes/Policies

**Mutual
Clarity**

**Learning
Reflection
Towards Action**

Reviewing Performance

- Professional development planning
- Reflecting and learning from past performance
- Career planning

Communication

- Checking in on work, workload
- Problem-solving
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Timely feedback
- Checking in on the person

**Staying
Connected**

Skills Practice: Engaged Listening



Four Levels of Listening

- 1. Superficial Listening*
- 2. Self-Referential Listening*
- 3. Fix-it Listening*
- 4. Engaged Listening***

I'm listening to you to understand better who you are and what this experience is like for you. In this situation, it's all about you. I want you to be fully heard.

Source: Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers & Leaders, Wilson & Gislason 2009

Breakout #2: Trio Group Activity - Levels of Listening

In your group of three, have one person (Speaker) share their reactions to the content regarding the performance management eco-system, the origins of our modern performance management approach or the supervision framework.



- Reflect on the previous content, then share with the group. You can use one of these questions as a starting point: *What's coming up for you after this reflection? How might this play out in your own experiences?*

The other two people (Listeners) in the group will just listen. You're creating 3 minutes of uninterrupted time for the speaker to share.

No questions, no additions.

- Stay in truly engaged listening.
- If you catch yourself going into another level of listening, bring yourself back to engaged listening.

After the 3 minutes, switch to a new person

Key elements of a successful supervision relationship

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Skill Practice: Communicating Expectations

Expectation Setting

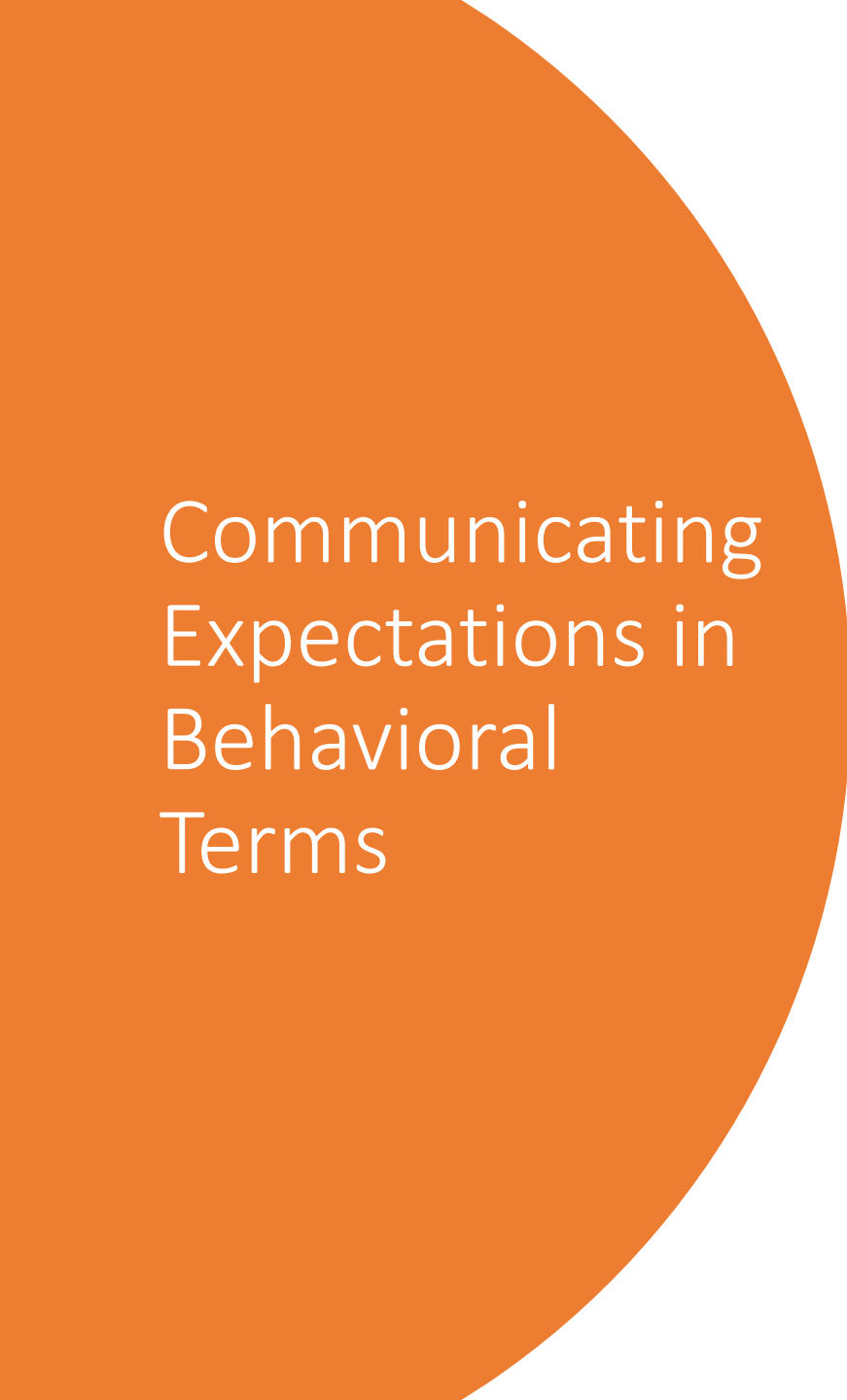
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**Mutual
Clarity**



CHAT
What do you
EXPECT
from your staff?



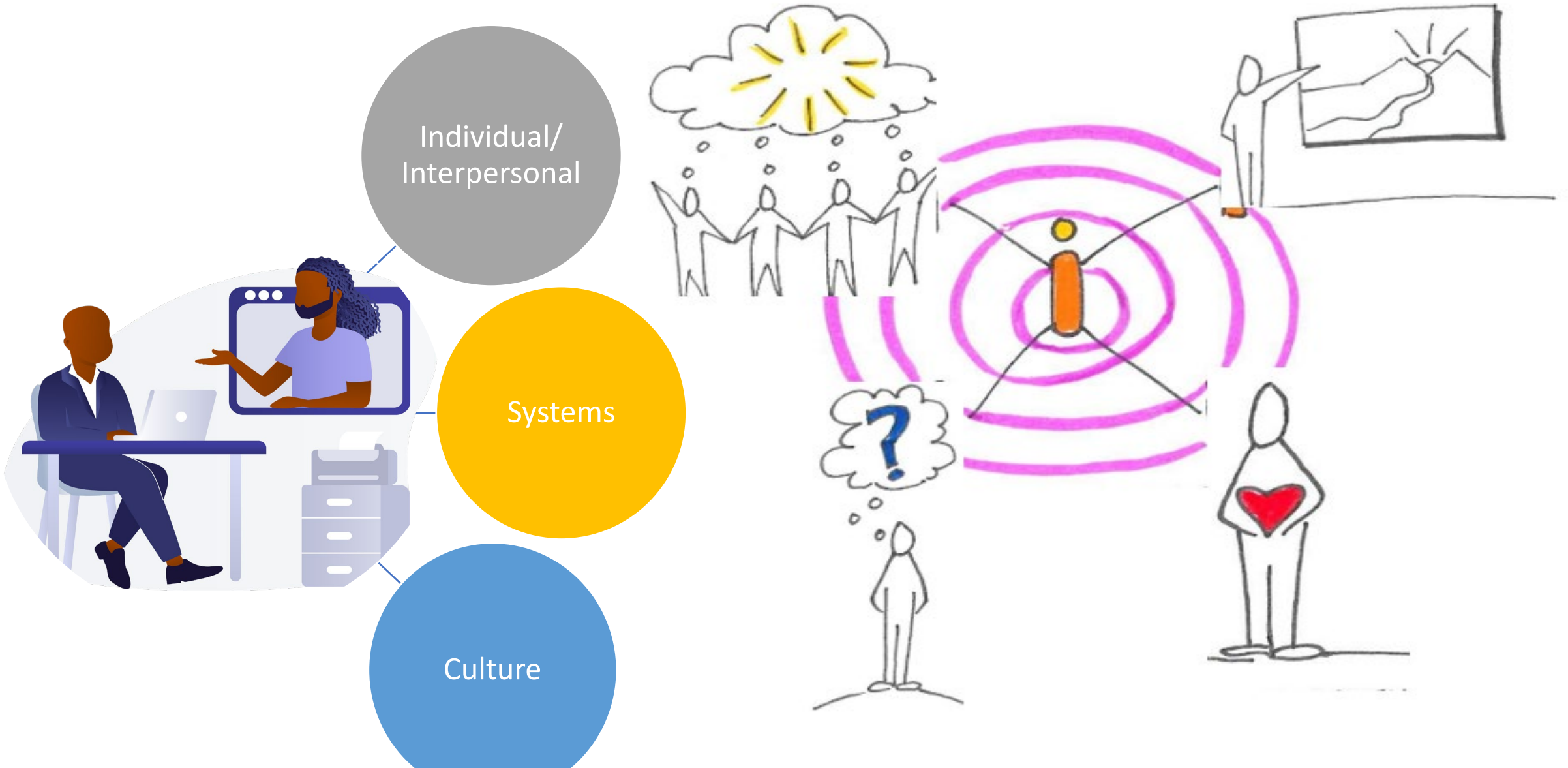
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Communicating Expectations in Behavioral Terms

What does it look like and sound like when someone is meeting an expectation?

- Behavior, observable action, or outcome based.
 - Consider avoiding vague terms.
 - Consider checking for understanding. You'll have to make some assumptions.
 - Describe using specific examples if appropriate.
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Where do our expectations come from?



Clarify Where Expectations Come From...

Organizational

- Embodying our values
- Standards and policies
- Onboarding and orientation

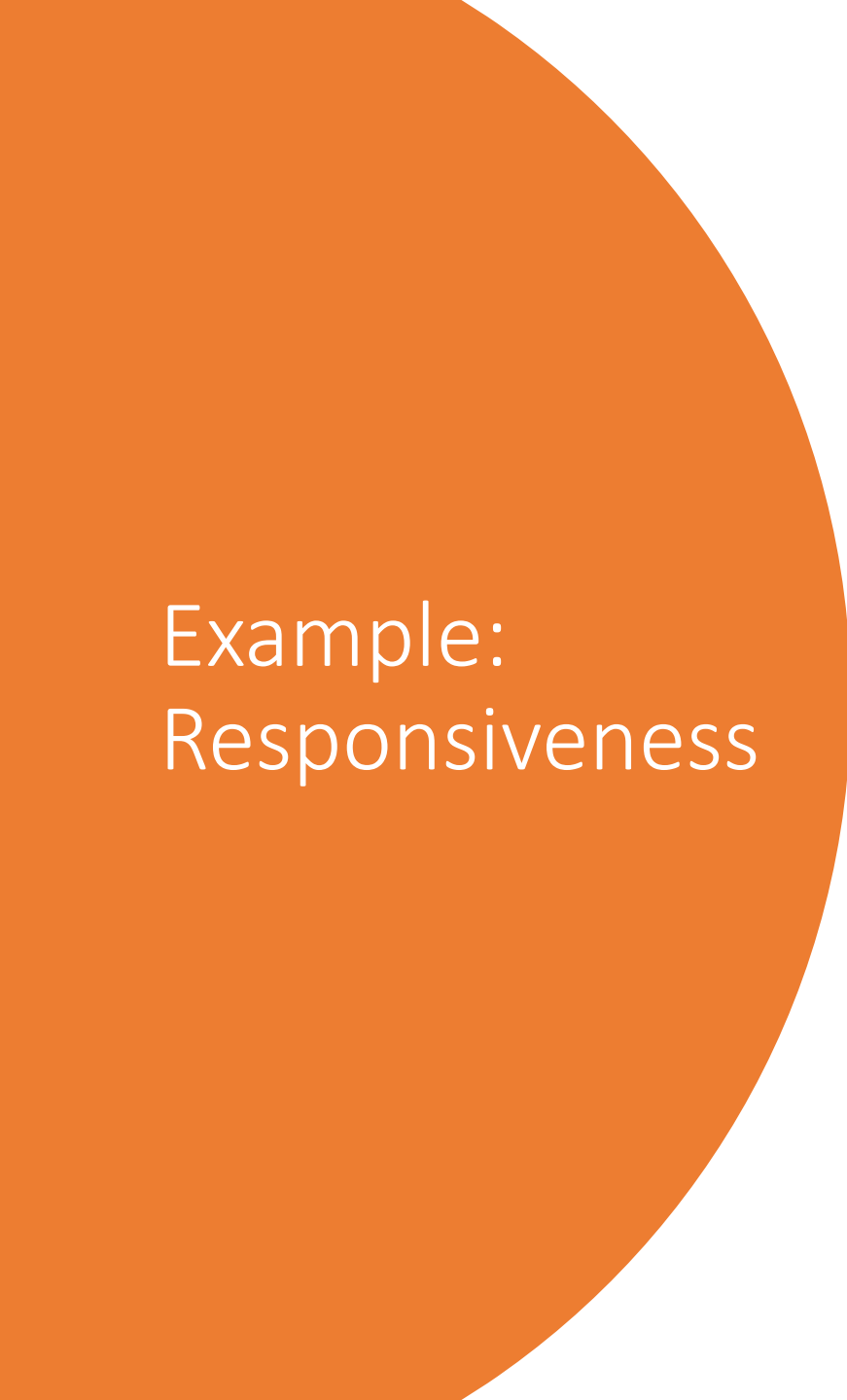
Departmental

- Requirements
- Regulations and compliance

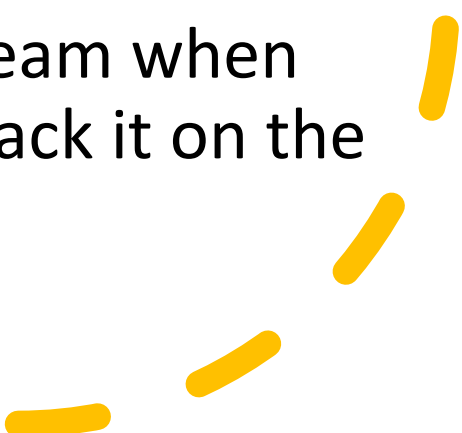
Individual

- Job descriptions and role accountabilities
- Performance goals and plans
- Agreements between collaborators (supervisors/supervisees, peers, etc.)

AND . . . We also carry expectations shaped by society — ideas about what's "normal" or acceptable. These often reflect racial, gender, and neurotypical norms rather than objective standards, even when they're presented that way.

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Example: Responsiveness

- Respond to communications (emails, etc.) within 1 business day.
 - Client requests should be prioritized. If you can't get to something within 1 day, let me know.
 - Meet deadlines without being reminded.
 - Notify the team in advance if you can't make a deadline so we can help or adjust.
 - Close the loop with the project team when you complete a task so we can track it on the project plan.
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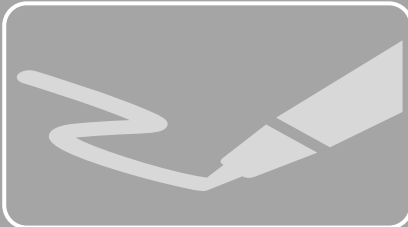
Behavioral Terms

Expectation	Behavior
Respect	Proactively greeting people at the site, answering the phones with your name, the organization's name, and a greeting such as "good morning or good afternoon." Arriving to meetings on time and being prepared for the day's agenda. Responding to emails no later than two business days and the same day for timely issues.
Accountability	Maintain client records and tracking grant requirements accurately. Having updated and accurate knowledge about a referral before providing to clients. Meeting all deadlines and, if unable to do so, communicate and ask for assistance in advance.

Solo Activity: Communicating Expectations as Behaviors



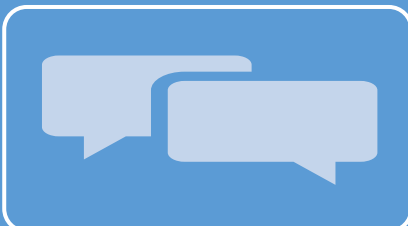
(2 minutes) Name 1 or 2 expectations of people I supervise?



(3 minutes) Write some of these expectations in terms of behavior, observable actions, or outcomes? (refer to slides for examples)



(3 minutes) Reflect and journal on the origins of these expectations or performance expectations in general. (The Why?)



(3 minutes) Reflect and journal on how you have been able to communicate your expectations. What are some challenges? What makes it easier?

Effective performance feedback

Providing feedback is an authentic and constructive process that allows the receiver of the feedback to understand what behaviors and actions are helping and hindering their success. Feedback should always include specific detail that will help the person better understand the impact and outcome that they are contributing to.

- Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders: Developing People to Achieve Your Mission

by Judith Wilson, Michelle Gislason



What makes feedback a powerful practice for teams and managers?



Skill Practice – Effective Feedback

SUPPORTIVE (POSITIVE) FEEDBACK IN FOUR STEPS:

- 1) Describe the behavior
- 2) Expectations (met)
- 3) Impact (positive)
- 4) Request (more of) and/or appreciative statement.



Guidance on Receiving Positive Feedback:

1. Stay in engaged or empathetic listening. Take a moment to really take in the feedback
2. Express gratitude for “gift” of feedback.

Examples of Feedback

Instead of this:	Try this:
"You were great in that meeting, thanks."	"When you were clear and concise while explaining your idea at the meeting, it really helped the management team to focus and clearly understand the benefits of your proposal. That will help us make a better decision for the program. I appreciate how well you prepared."
"You really handled that tough situation with the client well. Thanks, you're awesome!"	"I really want to tell you how well you handled the client's problem. You were able to calm him down by being patient and he could see that you were willing to take the time to listen to him. That helped get to the right resolution, ultimately allowing him to find the services he needs. That kind of thoughtful, careful approach is exactly what this work calls for. Thank you."
"Thanks for your help in that meeting"	"Janice, I just want to say thank you, you were great in our meeting. When you noticed that George interrupted multiple times during my presentation, you brought that to our attention and requested that everyone let me finish before folks provided their comments and questions. I was already nervous enough and when he was constantly asking questions, I started losing focus and felt like the meeting was getting derailed. After you put an end to the interruptions, I felt more confident and supported. Thanks so much for having my back!"

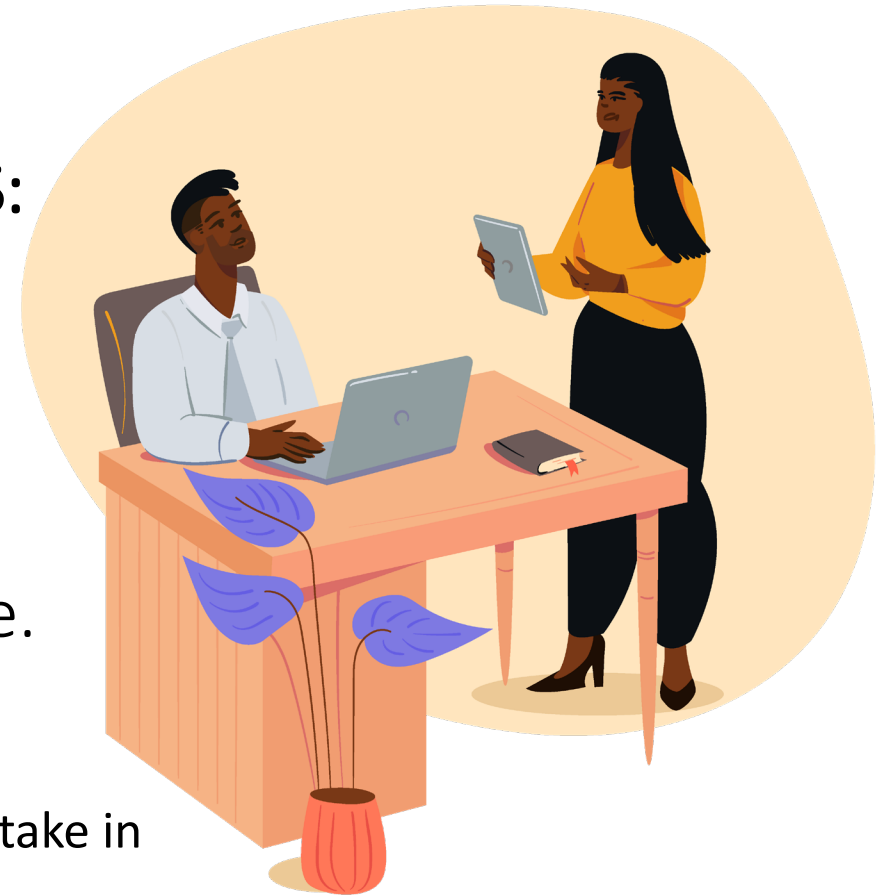
Skill Practice – Effective Feedback

CORRECTIVE (NEGATIVE) FEEDBACK IN FOUR STEPS:

- 1) Describe the behavior
- 2) Expectations (not met)
- 3) Impact (negative)
- 4) Request (change/different) and statement of confidence they will meet expectation next time.

Receiving Negative Feedback in 5 Steps

1. Stay in engaged or empathetic listening. Take a moment to really take in the feedback.
2. Express gratitude for “gift” of feedback.
3. Acknowledge or check for your own understanding of the feedback. If appropriate, include an apology that focuses on what your actions were and the impact.
4. Express the intention and commitment to change, learn, or reflect on that feedback. Even commit to circling back later.
5. Express gratitude again. Seek out more feedback.



Examples: Developmental/Corrective Feedback

"George, do you have a few minutes to talk? I want to give you some feedback about our meeting this morning. During my presentation, you jumped in multiple times with questions or comments — sometimes while I was still mid-sentence. We'd agreed at the start of the meeting to hold questions and comments for the discussion at the end. When that got interrupted, it came across as dismissive, and honestly, it made me feel disrespected.

I do value what you bring to these conversations — that's not in question. But it lands better when everyone gets the space to make their point without being cut off. I'm telling you this because I value our working relationship, and you've been a genuinely supportive partner. I want that to keep growing, which is part of why I'm bringing this up directly rather than letting it sit. Thanks for hearing me out."

"Cynthia, I want to talk with you about the drafts for the fellows program. Last week, they went to the advisory committee three days late. Because that part of the program involves specialized, technical information, we need their review to make sure everything's accurate before it goes out. Because of the delay, two committee members won't be able to review it for another two weeks, which makes our timeline for finalizing this very tight.

Going forward, if you think you might miss a deadline like this one, I need you to flag it to me as early as possible, so we can figure out together how to still hit it, or find another way to get a proper, timely review.

Meeting deadlines hasn't been an issue for you before, and I want to say that. I'm raising this now so we're aligned going forward, and so you know I'm here to help if something like this comes up again. Is there anything that would be helpful moving forward?"

Breakout #3: Performance Based Feedback

Silent Start (use the slides as a reference if needed).

- Think of one time that you could have given specific supportive (positive) feedback. Quickly draft that feedback statement so you can share it with the group.
- Think of one time that you could have given developmental/corrective (negative) feedback. Quickly draft that feedback statement so you can share it with the group.

Breakouts

- Round 1: Each of you share your positive feedback statement.
 - Give 30 seconds of context (just enough to know what the feedback is about, you do not have to give the “full story”).
 - Say your positive feedback statement.
- Round 2: Each of you share your corrective/negative feedback.
 - Give 30 seconds of context (just enough to know what the feedback is about, you do not have to give the “full story”).
 - Say your corrective feedback statement.

Why effective feedback matters in creating diverse and equitable workplaces?

Women, people of color, and older workers are garnering more problematic performance feedback on the job than white and Asian men and younger workers.

- Report by Textio: *Who Gets the Most Useless Feedback (2022)*
- For every piece of inactionable feedback received by white men under 40, women over 40 receive 4.4; Black women (across age groups) receive 8.8.
- Women get 22% more personality feedback than men, including positive and negative feedback.
- Asian workers receive less personality feedback than any other racial group. Asian men get the highest amount of actionable quality feedback.
- Women are twice as likely to report being described as collaborative and nice, seven times more likely to report being described as opinionated, and 11 times more likely to report being described as abrasive.
- White people report being described as ambitious 4.9 times more often than Black people, and 7.1 times more than Asian people.
- Women, Black and Latinx people, and those over 30 tend to receive the most exaggerated feedback.

Skill Practice: Listening with Inquiry

Adapted Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders: Developing People to Achieve Your Mission
1st Edition by Judith Wilson (Author), Michelle Gislason

Inquiry – Using Questions *

Inquiry is the core of the coaching approach. Inquiring or being curious when you are coaching helps others deepen their learning as they unfold the answers for themselves. The skill of inquiry is the ability to ask useful questions and pull forth the brilliance from the other person. Inquiry involves asking questions for their sake, rather than for yours.

Hold Your Advice

When you give advice and solve the problem, you own the issue and outcome. When you allow others to think through their own solutions with your support, they own the issue and the outcome. Of course, there will be times when direction and advice can be effective, but be careful of looking to be the one to have “all the answers”.

3 Types of questions

1. Open-ended questions

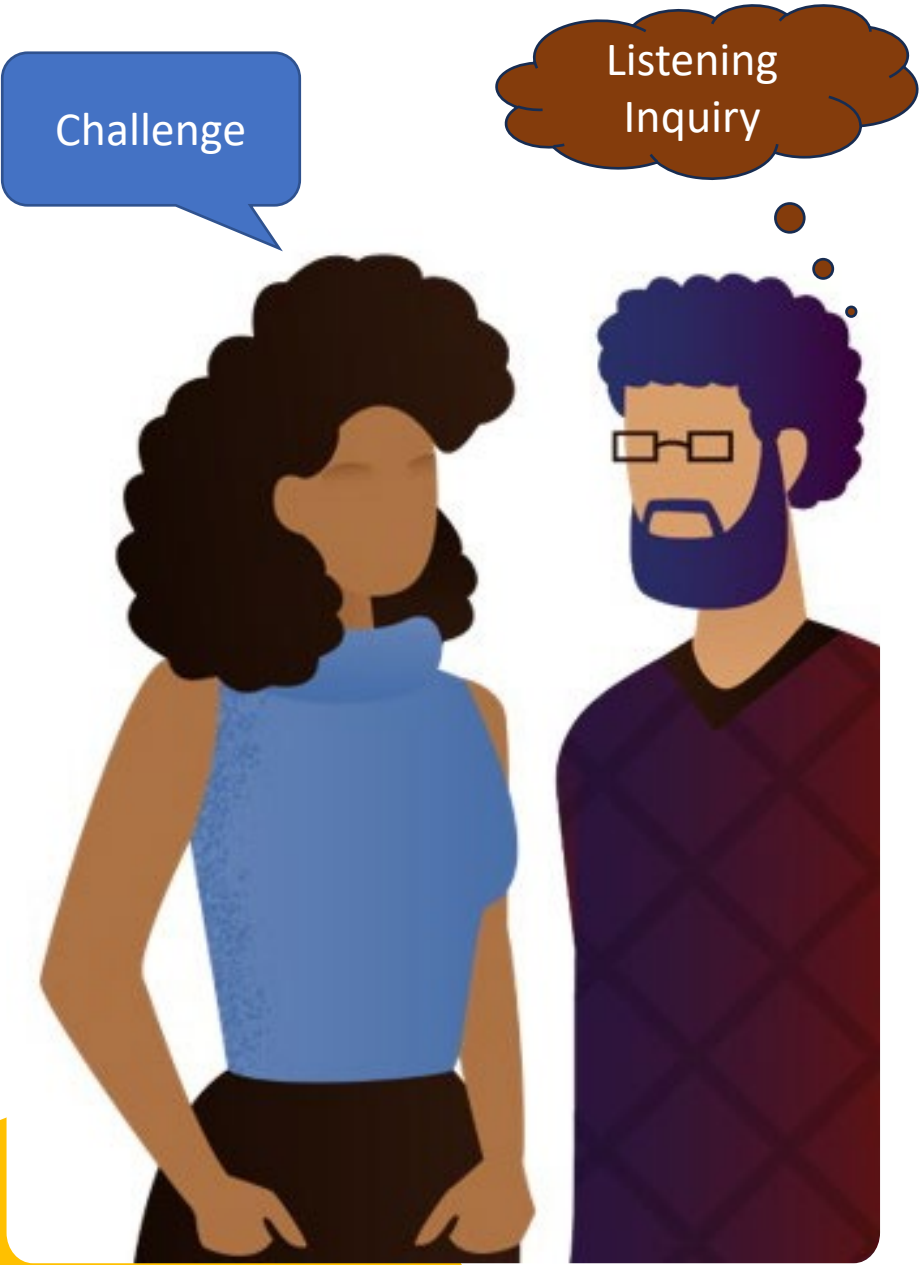
Open-ended questions lead to deeper answers and more reflective and expansive thinking by both parties, and generally start with: What, How, Who, When, Where, Which

2. Closed-ended questions

Closed-ended questions elicit a yes or no answer. These questions do not forward the person's thinking, and generally start with: Do/did, Can/could, Are/Is, Will/would, Have, Should

3. The Question “Why?”

*The question **why** generally moves a person into “explanation” or “defense” mode. Use this question sparingly.*



Challenge

Listening
Inquiry

Practice Listening with Inquiry (Coaching Skills)

COACHEE: (choose one of these topics to get support)

1. What is a challenge you have in your role as a supervisor right now? (Goal: promising approaches or next steps to address that challenge)
2. What areas of the supervision framework feel the most challenging to you? Why? (Goal: possible ways I can strengthen my practices as a supervisor.)

PARTNER

- Practice Engaged Listening
- Notice other levels of listening
 - Will it be useful or do I need to go back to engaged listening now?
- **Use open-ended questions (refer to questions cheat sheet for help)**
- Avoid sharing advice

*What do you want to . . .
try?
practice?
do further learning?
share?*

- Make note of norms, practices, and habits regarding managing people and performance.
- Intentionally practice using open-ended questions in every conversation.
- Notice your listening (4 levels)
- Reflect on your feedback practice. Notice when you “cut short” on your positive feedback and try to be more specific.
- Share content with your peers and people you supervise.
- Have a discussion with someone about a “challenging” expectation.





Stay connected

Sending you resources

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