

Mindset from the Outset

Commitments to improve any conversation:

1. Assume people are doing their best and have good intentions
2. Suspend the impulse to judge yourself and others
3. Be willing to give more than you get
4. Let go of the idea that someone is either right or wrong
5. Be willing to say "I don't know"

Collaborative communication requires more than just following the steps, using a framework, or applying pragmatic tools. It requires a shift in mindset which takes practice. Use these commitments in meetings, or ask the team to commit to these with you. You will be understood — and understand others — in a new way.

Listen Actively

Do:

1. Adopt a mindset of curiosity
2. Find ways to empathize with thoughts, feelings, or concerns
3. Be fully present and focus on what the other person is saying
4. Seek to understand before being understood
5. Demonstrate to the other person that you're listening

Don't:

1. Interrupt or talk over the person
2. Defend
3. Dismiss their opinion, idea, or feelings
4. Assume you know what they're going to say
5. Finish someone else's sentence for them

When they feel heard, your conversation will go better and be more productive.

Attitude of Gratitude

Practice the following:

1. Focus on being present in this conversation — let go of what's happened in the day or what you need to do next, be here right now
2. Be willing to offer kindness and compassion, even if it's only one-sided
3. If an unrelated thought or feeling arises, ask yourself "is this helpful?" if not, set it aside for now
4. Focus on and be specific about what's working well so you can repeat it
5. Make time to say "thank you" to build a culture of gratitude

Gratitude is an opportunity for you to increase the number of positive authentic interactions at work. The more you practice it, the more you feel it. It's easy to become distracted by what's wrong. Teams that practice being present and appreciative build on their bright spots to create more of what's working well.