

Welcome! We will start on time at 9:00am.

NUCATS Series on Developing and Enhancing Mentoring Relationships:

Maintaining Effective Communication/Difficult Conversations

Presenters: Mercedes Carnethon, PhD and Kelly N. Michelson, MD, MPH

Upcoming Workshop Schedule

Date / Time	Topic / Presenter(s)	Format
May 12, 2022 9:00 – 10:30 AM	Maintaining Effective Communication/Difficult Conversations Mercedes Carnethon, PhD and Kelly D. Michelson, MD, PhD	ONLINE
June 9, 2022 9:00 – 10:30 AM	Articulating your Mentoring Philosophy and Plan Adam Goodman, PhD	ONLINE
June 22, 2022 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Articulating your Mentoring Philosophy and Plan Adam Goodman, PhD	IN PERSON <i>Tentative</i>

In April the session will be held the **1st Thursday of the month, to accommodate CPS Spring Break and holiday schedules.

Thank You



Morgan Barrowman

Morgan.barrowman@northwestern.edu

Program Coordinator
Center for Education and Career Development
NUCATS



Emily Traw

emily.traw@northwestern.edu

Assistant Director
Center for Education and Career Development
NUCATS

Today's Facilitators



Mercedes Carnethon, PhD

carnethon@northwestern.edu

Co-Director of NUCATS CECD and Vice Chair,
Department of Preventive Medicine
Mary Harris Thompson Professor
of Preventive Medicine (Epidemiology) and Medicine
(Pulmonary and Critical Care)



Kelly N Michelson, MD, MPH

K-michelson@northwestern.edu

Director, Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities
Julia and David Uihlein Professor of Bioethics and
Medical Humanities
Professor of Pediatrics (Critical Care)

Learning Objectives

1. Describe 2 fundamental components of communicating effectively as a mentor.
2. Identify ineffective communication strategies and propose alternative effective techniques to promote communication
3. Discuss at least 2 elements of a conversation to deliver positive and negative feedback
4. List at least two effective communication techniques to facilitate a workplace conversation

Keys to Effective Communication

Keys to Effective Communication

General Considerations

- Increase your awareness of yourself and others
 - *"In each moment you spend in another person's presence, you are communicating that person's importance to you. Are you doing this consciously or unconsciously?" Denise Holmes*

From Communication Best Practices for Mentoring

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/mentoring-best-practices/communication/>

Keys to Effective Communication

General Considerations

- Get curious about the other person's story
 - *"In order to understand what another person is saying, you must assume that it is true, and try to imagine what it could be true of."*
George Miller

From Communication Best Practices for Mentoring

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/mentoring-best-practices/communication/>

Keys to Effective Communication

General Considerations

- Listen for passion and potential
 - *"Listening for potential means listening to people as if they have all the tools they need to be successful, and could simply benefit from exploring their thoughts and ideas out loud." David Rock*

From Communication Best Practices for Mentoring

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/mentoring-best-practices/communication/>

Keys to Effective Communication

General Considerations

- Share your own crystalized experience
 - *"...human beings thrive best when we grow in the presence of those who have gone before." Parks Daloz*


From Communication Best Practices for Mentoring

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/mentoring-best-practices/communication/>

Keys to Effective Communication

Some Specific Approaches

- Active Listening
 - Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal language
 - Remember key points (memory or note taking)
 - Respond
- Reflective listening
 - Understand what is said
 - Offer the idea back to the speaker to confirm understanding

- 
- How do you feel before a discussion where you know you have to deliver difficult feedback?

Set Yourself Up for Success When Giving Feedback

When and Where


- Regularly
- Timely
- Environment free from distraction and with adequate time allocated

How

- Establish the mutual goal
- Be specific and concrete
- Identify areas for improvement
- Probe for solutions
- Focus on performance not personality

Specific Approaches to Discuss Difficult Topics

- Probe to demonstrate curiosity
 - "Tell me more about ..."
 - "What led you to ..."
 - "What happened when ..."
 - "Looking back now, what would you do ..."
- Align verbal and non-verbal cues
- Stay positive and optimistic
 - Paint a picture of mutual success
 - Reflect concern and empathy
 - Honest
 - Emphasize growth and change
- Ending the Conversation
 - Summarize
 - Planning/Next Steps

- 
- What are some barriers to effective communication?
 - From the perspective of the “deliverer”
 - From the perspective of the recipient

Barriers to Effective Communication

- Defensiveness
- Premature assumptions
- Judgments based on culture differences or interpersonal relationships
- Mixed messages
 - Misalignment of verbal and non-verbal cues
 - Verbal contradictions in a single discussion

Receiving Feedback

What can I do?

- Listen
- Try not to interrupt
- Ask for clarification if needed
- Ask for strategies for improvement
- Do not always rush to respond
 - If needed, digest the feedback and plan another time to continue the conversation
- Thank the person

Receiving Feedback

What if I disagree?

- Step back – try to evaluate the feedback without emotion
- Talk to a trusted peer or another mentor
- If you decide to take a different direction – consider letting the person know
- Look for patterns in feedback you receive

Changing Ineffective Communication to Effective Communication

When Communication Goes
Bad. . .



Consequences of a Discussion Gone Bad

- When both parties leave the discussion
 - Dissatisfied
 - Confused
 - Angry
 - Frustrated
 - Feeling time was wasted
 - Uncertain about next steps

Video Example: Background

- An assistant professor wants her department to put her up for promotion early. She has requested a meeting her Chair and mentor to ask him to support this promotion. Her chair has no idea this request is coming and is not in favor on the basis of feedback he has gotten from others that she (the assistant professor) has some problems with productivity and collegiality in the workplace. Her chair has never communicated these concerns to her in prior conversations.

- 
- [Link to video](#)

What are problems with the discussion that just transpired?

- Lack of regular ongoing feedback
- Poorly timed request and delivery of feedback
- Second-hand reporting of critiques
- No one taking initiative to book meetings
- Lack of preparation for the meeting
- Defensive reception of feedback (both ways)
- Not asking questions to get at the deeper issue
- No agenda for the meeting

Focus on four critical issues

- Lack of regular ongoing feedback
- Poorly timed request and delivery of feedback
- Second-hand reporting of critiques
- No one taking initiative to book meetings
- Lack of preparation for the meeting
- Defensive reception of feedback (both ways)
- Not asking questions to get at the deeper issue
- No agenda for the meeting

Group Instructions

- Briefly introduce yourselves to one another (name and department) – 2 minutes total
- Choose 1 or more of the key problem areas:
 - Identify concrete tools to modify the discussion delivery to make it more effective
 - Generate a brief “script” that presents a more effective way of managing the ineffective aspect of the discussion
 - **Bonus:** name at least 1 strategy that could have been carried out in advance to avoid the problematic discussion

Report Back: Ineffective → Effective

- Name concrete tools to modify the discussion delivery to make it more effective
- Generate a brief “script” that presents a more effective way of managing one of the ineffective aspects of the discussion
- **Bonus:** name a strategy to guide better meetings

Turning Ineffective Communications into Effective Communications

- Prepare for the discussion
 - Meeting agendas allow both parties to prepare themselves for the discussion resulting in greater efficiency and productivity
 - Priming the other party if its going to be a potentially difficult discussion can help
- Listen to the speaker instead of focusing on your next response
 - Commit to devoting time (on your calendar and during the discussion) to hear and understand the issue
 - Ask probing questions to clarify the “issue”

Turning Ineffective Discussions into Effective Discussions (cont.)

- Don't let the emotions hijack the discussion and obscure the problem—but don't ignore emotions
 - Remain calm and rational when presented with strong emotions
 - Allow space for emotion, but firmly re-direct to the current task at hand. If redirection is not possible, postpone the discussion
- Focus on the “problem” and not the “person”
 - Identify and seek shared agreement about the problem by using probing questions
 - Create a shared space for helping to manage the problem

Alternatives to Face-to-Face Discussions

Email

- **Pros**

- Immediate
- One-way delivery w/o interruption
- Can provide cites or support
- Paper trail

- **Cons**

- One-way delivery without exchange
- Lacks nuance
- Creates a paper trail

Group Meeting

- **Pros**

- Multiple parties to share input at once
- Efficient
- Witnessed

- **Cons**

- Can stifle a minority opinion
- Leaves the “minority” party vulnerable

Videoconference

- **Pros**

- Allows use of multiple “senses” to gauge emotions
- Overcomes barriers of F-F

- **Cons**

- Technology glitches can be distracting
- Harder to control outside distractions

Summary: Turning an Ineffective Conversation Into an Effective Conversation

- Conversation is a 2-way street, if information is to be communicated without input make that clear—but consider whether discussion can happen
- It's never too late for a re-do
 - “Our last meeting left me feeling that we didn't achieve our shared goals, can we revisit the discussion using another approach?”
- Preparation and planning are key
- Approach every discussion with a “shared win” as the goal

Summary and Next Steps



Communication is a 2-Way Street

- You can control what you put into a discussion, but not what the other person gives you
 - Model good communication skills
 - Steer the conversation to a positive direction
- Stop a conversation that isn't productive
 - Equally able to do this as the mentor or the mentee
 - "I know this is important to you and it's critical that we discuss it, but I need time to get myself into the right frame of mind. . ."
 - Communicate clearly why you are stopping a discussion

What do you do when you feel you've done everything right?

- Offer “benefit of the doubt”
 - But some people are simply unreasonable or unrealistic
- Consult with a peer or a mentor about the situation (if it does not require discretion)
- Consider involving a senior party who has some authority to adjudicate a dispute (ombudsperson)

Institutional Resources for Difficult Conversations

- Faculty to faculty conflicts are handled by the **Office for Faculty Affairs** at FSM
- Disputes involving staff are handled by the **Human Resources Office**
- Disputes involving trainees or students are handled by the **Office for Student Affairs** or **Office for Postdoctoral Affairs**

Questions?

Which Aspects of the Workshop Did you Find the Most Helpful?

- Zoom Poll
- Please complete the full evaluation that you will receive via email
- We use this information to refine our offerings and meet the needs of our institutional community