

Training Manual

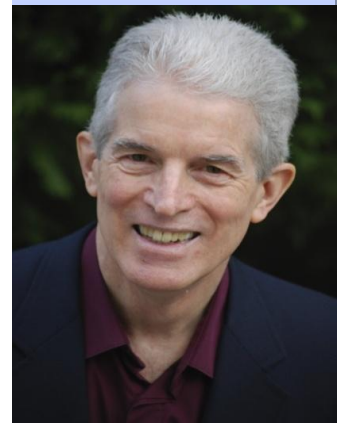
For the Virtual Workshop Series and
Self-Study Program:

Module 3: Dialogue Skills

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Module 3: Dialogue Skills

Introduction

This collection of articles **reinforces and supplements** Module 3, “Dialogue,” of my **Tele-Workshop Series**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals.

These articles can increase your ability for **leadership** and your **professional effectiveness**. If you enjoy and learn best by reading, they can stand alone. If you do nothing more than read these articles, you will miss the skill-building exercises of our Program, but you will gain much knowledge. An intellectual understanding of emotional intelligence can be the first step toward better performance.

These articles will also profit you after you have completed Module 3 of the Tele-Workshop for they will remind you of key points you have learned. If you have missed any sessions, they will help fill you in.

Even if you attended all the sessions, these articles will reinforce your learning. You will see the learning points in new contexts.

These articles will also reinforce and supplement your learning if you take the **Self-Study Program** version of my **Tele-Workshop Series**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. This program gives you **over 80 audio recordings** of live Tele-Workshop sessions to listen to on an MP3 player at your leisure—anywhere, anytime.

In short, these articles will **enrich your learning experience**. They will help make it stick—and last.

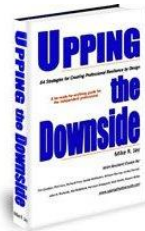


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Bonus:

My published book chapter, “*Emotional Intelligence for Resilience,*” is available for free on our web site, <http://www.EagleAlliance.com>. Look for the book cover of the Amazon best-seller, Upping the Down Side:





Dialogue is like Surfing

A good analogy for dialogue is that of surfing. The surfer **stays on top of big waves** and uses their strength to surge forward. The big waves can be analogous to emotions. Emotions can propel us forward or they can suck us downward. Surfers who lose their balance may fall off their surfboard and get sucked downward. Those who surf well can **stay in the flow**.

In this analogy it is important for dialogue that you **be aware of your emotions**. **Self-awareness is one Module** of my Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, and **Dialogue is another Module**. Being aware of your emotions is like being aware of the shape of the wave you are riding when surfing.

For example, if you know you are angry, this knowledge will shape how you conduct your dialogue with the person with whom you are angry. You can express your anger as part of the topic you want to dialogue about. You might introduce your topic with, "I am angry that you did not come to my meeting. May we discuss this?" You are asking permission to dialogue on the topic of your anger and his/her absence.

On the other hand, if you are unaware of your anger, you are likely to introduce the topic with something like, "You did not come to my meeting. Why not?" And you are likely to have your anger come out in your tone of voice. Of course, the other person will notice the edge in your tone of voice and become defensive. The sharp words, "Why not?" usually point to a fault and will also convey your anger. Most likely the other person will react defensively to these words too.

In this example, your awareness of your anger allows you to express it directly in words rather than in edgy tone and sharp words. When you are **more sensitive to the waves of your emotions**, you can express yourself in more sensitive ways to others. You are more able to **speak in a manner others can** hear so that dialogue can occur.

You can **improve your ability to dialogue** in my individual and group Executive Coaching via our **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, with a whole Module on Dialogue. For more information, please email me via the "Contact Us" link above or telephone me, Bill Murray, at 919-240-7924.

Dialogue is Not like Tennis

Some people mistakenly give themselves credit for being good at dialogue when they are treating it like a **game of tennis**. They treat the discussion as if they have to size up their “opponent’s” ideas like an incoming tennis ball and **hit it back forcefully** into a place their **opponent cannot reach**.

They prize their intellectual ability to out hit their opponents. They are really more in **debate mode** than in dialogue mode. **Debaters seek to win. Dialoguers seek to learn** how the other person thinks and feels. They do not see the other person as an opponent, but rather as someone they can **collaborate with for a mutual gain**.

If you want to improve your dialogue skills, you need to make sure you start with the right attitudes. Seek to collaborate toward finding a win/win solution to your problem or issue. Utilize Habit 5 of **Stephen Covey’s book**, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: “**Seek first to understand**, then to be understood.” You listen with the goal of understanding rather than the goal of outwitting your opponent.

Another non-tennis approach to dialogue is to **flex your own approach** to match that of the other person. If you can see that the other person likes a lot of facts and details, give them that. You may prefer seeing the big picture. If you know typology such as the Myers-Briggs, you can use that to hone in on how the other person prefers to operate. In Myers-Briggs for example, you know that a Sensor prefers the here and now factual actual and an Intuitive prefers the future-oriented vision of the big picture.

You can dialogue with people better by flexing to use their preferred approach such as starting off with the big picture for an intuitive. Flexing to accommodate others is about the opposite of treating them like a tennis opponent. Dialogue takes some learning because most of us have learned the tennis approach in schools and in general in our culture. Businesses tend to give lip service to dialogue but actually reward being **competitive, playing a hard game** of tennis. However, using **dialogue may yield better results**.

Want to get some **training to improve you dialogue skills**? Explore my individual and group Executive Coaching via our **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, with a whole Module on Dialogue. For more information, please email me via the “Contact Us” link above or telephone me, Bill Murray, at 919-240-7924.

Good Attitudes for Dialogue

What sorts of attitudes **encourage good dialogue**? To improve our ability to dialogue, we must first have good attitudes, then good interpersonal skills.

The first good attitude is to stay in **between aggression and avoidance**. Do not seek to win or beat up on the other person. And do not avoid conflict so much that you end up withdrawing.

I have written in other articles about the human fight/flight syndrome. When we feel endangered we tend to snap into fighting or fleeing. This can happen almost automatically. It takes much self-awareness to stay in between these two reactions and keep up a dialogue. I have written elsewhere about how to build self-awareness, and this is a huge topic in my **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals.

It helps to hold on to the attitude of seeking a win/win solution. If the other person perceives that you have that intention, he/she will tend to move to meet you in a mutually satisfying solution. Dialogue is the means with which you discover the solutions. **Good attitudes are what make dialogue possible.**

To be good at dialogue, avoid the attitudes of a debater. You do not seek to attack the other person by finding all the flaws in their position. A debater “wins” only because a judge is present to declare him/her the winner. The loser probably is in no mood to cooperate on any solution. In the business world, this usually leads to a suboptimal outcome.

It is better to dialogue and discover a **win/win solution**. Then the other person is more likely to cooperate on implementing the solution.

To be good at dialogue, avoid the attitudes of a **tennis player** too. Your job is not to hit the ball so hard the opponent cannot get to it. You are not trying to hit the ball into an unexpected place by outsmarting the other person and showing him up.

Competitive attitudes do not work well for dialogue. You have to learn new attitudes that support collaboration. Dialogue is a work of collaboration.

I invite you to improve your attitudes and skills in dialoguing through my **Executive Coaching or Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. For more information, you may contact me, Bill Murray, at the above link, “Contact Us,” or at 919-240-7924.

Dialogue Better with Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a crucial skill for dialoguing. How do you paraphrase?

One way to paraphrase is to simply reflect back the speaker's own words. You pick out key words you have heard and repeat them. "You are saying that Obama will be a good President because...." This makes the speaker feel heard because you have picked up on their key ideas and words.

Another way to paraphrase is to summarize by putting their message into your own words. "In summary it seems your main point is that...." This lets the speaker know that you have understood their comments because you can summarize them.

Another way to paraphrase is to ask for a clarification. "I am not sure that I am getting this right. Are you saying X or Y?"

Paraphrasing should always be in the form of a question, not an assertion. The question may simply be in your voice inflection. Or you may clearly ask a question at the end of your paraphrase such as, "Did I get that right?" Or, "Is that right?" If you fail to use the form of a question, the speaker may possibly take offense because you seem to be mind reading. That means you seem to be telling them what they think, which can be intrusive, rather than just asking them if you got it right.

Similarly, paraphrase with a light touch, such as, "I wonder if you are saying...." Stay humble and your paraphrase will be welcomed.

Most of the time speakers do welcome paraphrasing because it makes them feel heard. So be bold to offer frequent paraphrases, but do it in a humble manner.

Paraphrasing leads to clarification. You will find out if you misunderstood anything because the speaker will correct you. "No, I did not mean to say X, but rather Y." Don't let this bother you that you got it wrong. Speakers are glad to correct you. Better to find out now that you got it wrong than to go off and do the wrong thing.

In summary, increase the frequency of your paraphrasing and enjoy better conversations with more rapport and fewer misunderstandings.

We can improve your skill at paraphrasing and dialoguing in our Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. For more information, please call me, Bill Murray, at 919-240-7924 or email using the above link, "Contact Us."

Dialogue Regarding Feelings and Values

One way to encourage good dialogue is to listen well and draw out the other person through paraphrasing. As I have written in another article, you need to **paraphrase the content** of the speaker in order to make sure that you have gotten it right.

Now I recommend that you sometimes also **paraphrase the speaker's feelings**. If they express feelings, it is easy to paraphrase them back. Suppose the speaker says, "I am annoyed at John for being so late to our meeting." You can reply, "Yes, that must be annoying for you." Now you can take this paraphrasing one step further when the speaker only implies feelings. Suppose the speaker says, "It is awfully inconvenient for us to have to wait on John to start this meeting." You might reply, "It sounds like you may be annoyed at his lateness, right?"

Notice, when you step out with a guess for a paraphrase, it is important to end your paraphrase with a question. In that last sentence, it becomes a question when the word, "right" is added and the voice inflection goes up.

I also recommend that you sometimes **paraphrase the speaker's underlying values**. In the above situation you might add, "Being on time is important for you, isn't it?" The value of timeliness has been implied in the speaker's comments. You can paraphrase it back and end with a question.

Another example of paraphrasing values might occur if a colleague of yours was complaining about her boss micro-managing her. You might paraphrase back your guess at what she values by asking, "It sounds like what you really want is your independence, to do things your own way. Is that right?"

Doing the above is part of being emotionally intelligent. It includes the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and guess their feelings and values. When you express them well with a question at the end, you are perceived as having empathy. The speaker will feel that you are **in tune with them. Empathy is a hallmark of emotional intelligence.**

When you do this type of paraphrasing correctly, it is a marvelous way of **connecting**. The speaker feels heard at a deeper level than usual. **Rapport is greater** and the two of you will probably **work together more effectively**.

Would you like to **increase your ability** to dialogue better with paraphrasing and expressing empathy? I invite you to explore my **individual and group executive coaching**. Call me, Bill Murray, at 919-240-7924 or email me via the link above, "Contact Us."

Dialogue - Seek Feedback

To **improve dialogue**, when you are speaking, pause often to **ask for feedback**. This will allow you to see how your listener perceives what you say. Perhaps the listener has mixed up some of your content or has not picked up on your emphasis. You will never know this unless you get the listener to talk about what they are receiving from you.

This is analogous to a **space shuttle** giving and receiving feedback about its course with the land-based mission control station. The space shuttle emits radio signals that are picked up by mission control. Mission control computers calculate where the space shuttle is and compare that to its approved course. The shuttle is almost always off course a little. It veers back and forth. Mission control radios back a course correction which the space shuttle immediately puts into action.

We need to get feedback for the same reason as the space shuttle, to find out if we are **off course**. Or you might say, to find out if the listener is off course. Then we can make a **course correction**. After hearing feedback, we might say, "You got X right but what I was trying to say about Y is..." We can correct their misperceptions. Sometimes we may realize that we are miscommunicating. We accidentally gave a false impression. Now we can correct that: "Oh, I didn't mean to say that. I should have used a different word such as..."

Here is a guideline to help you remember to seek feedback. **Whenever you make a strong assertion, follow it with a question.**

As part of your effort to increase your emotional intelligence, start to notice more often when you are making assertions. Notice when you feel strongly about something, when it is important to you. Grow your self-awareness. Then when you talk about it, stop soon. Ask a question.

You may ask, "**Having heard me say this, what comes up for you?**" This question will seldom put anyone on the defensive. It allows them to move as they wish in answering you. I suggest you memorize this question and use it often.

Participants of my Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop series, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, have said months later after learning this question, that it has stuck with them and proved very helpful in getting feedback. Why not consider joining our ongoing Tele-Workshop series so that you can learn and practice skills like seeking feedback? For more information, see www.EmotionallyIntelligentLeadership.com, or call me, Bill Murray at 919-240-7924, or email me via the above link, "Contact Us."

Dialogue - Four Ways to Seek Feedback

Here are four ways to ask for feedback.

You need to do this in order to discover if your listener has received your message correctly. As you know, many **filters** get in the way of good communication. Some filters that **distort** communication are prejudice, bias, preconceived views, assumptions, etc. How will you know if your listener has a filter that distorts your message?

Ask your listener one or more of the following questions.

1. **Check for understanding:** You might say, "I want to make sure that I have been communication clearly. Would you mind telling me what you have heard me say?" Notice how you take the blame here. Perhaps you did not communicate clearly. You must avoid the danger that they perceive you are faulting them for poor listening.
2. Ask **how they may differ** from you: "What do you see as the pros and cons of my view?" The words "and cons" are crucial. These words open the door for people to disagree with you. Especially if you are their boss or an authority figure, then will tend to stay silent. You must coax them out. Give them permission to disagree.
3. Ask about their **emotional reactions:** "Having heard me say this, what comes up for you?" If they launch back into concepts, you may need to focus your question with a guess about their emotions. "I am wondering if you are frustrated, irked, disappointed, etc. by what I said?" If you don't ask, they may go away annoyed and you will never know it. Annoyed people sometimes smile back at you. You have to coax them out to discover their true reactions.
4. Ask about their **values and priorities:** "How important is this issue for you?" Again if you fail to ask, your own assumptions will prevail and may not be accurate. Perhaps you have emphasized how important this project is for you. You assume that they are in the same boat as you. But if you ask, you may learn that they have other, more urgent priorities. Better to find out now, than to learn later on that they dragged their feet.

In summary, for clear, effective communication, ask for feedback to learn:

1. If they got the **facts** straight
2. How they **think** about your assertions, pros and cons
3. How they **feel** about your assertions, emotional reactions
4. How **important** your assertions are to them.

Participants of my **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop series**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, have said this 4-pronged approach has proved very helpful in getting



feedback. Why not consider joining our ongoing Tele-Workshop series so that you can learn and **practice skills** like seeking feedback? For more