

# Exercises

## Communication Tools for Trouble-shooting Problems NAG 2-1-2006

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## OVERVIEW

We will break into small groups consisting of three people each. In each exercise, take turns going around the circle performing the exercise. Budget your time so that each person gets a turn.

## EXERCISES

### Different Minds See Different Things

Everyone should have a postcard or page torn from a calendar. Everyone spends thirty - sixty seconds staring at their photographs. Then, take turns describing what you see in your photograph. Feel free to interpret as much or as little as you like. If the photograph stirs feelings or memories or other reactions, feel free to include those or not, as you prefer. Feel free to limit yourself to a single sentence or to expound for several paragraphs. This is a free-form exercise the goal of which is to lay foundation for the succeeding exercises.

Trade photographs once (or twice, if you have time) and repeat.

### Exercise A: Neutral Observation

When it is your turn, read a statement. Then, practice translating the statement into an *observation*, without any *interpretation* mixed in. Hint: pretend you are a video camera and use language which describes only what the video camera could see and hear.

### Exercise B: Identifying Feelings

When it is your turn, read a statement. Put yourself into the shoes of the person making the statement -- imagine a scenario in which you might say these words. Then, make guesses at what you are feeling. Hint: mad, sad, or glad.

For extra credit, expand your feeling vocabulary beyond mad/sad/glad (see the Feelings Inventory at the end of this hand-out for an example of the symphony of feelings we are capable of experiencing.)

### Exercise C: Needs

When it is your turn, read a statement. Put yourself into the shoes of the person making the statement -- imagine a scenario in which you might say these words. Then, make guesses at what you are needing. Hint: keep the Needs inventory handy and crib from it.

## **Exercise D: Translatng Dissatisfaction with Others into Clear Requests**

When it is your turn, read a statement. Put yourself into the shoes of the person making the statement -- imagine a scenario in which you might say these words. Then, try translating the statement into a *clear, present, doable* request.

Hint: beware of language which suggests that the other person is wrong in some way or that threatens punishment if the other person does not comply with the request.

## **APPENDICES**

This hand-out contains three appendices.

### **Feelings Inventory**

The Feelings Inventory lists examples of the wide range of feelings which we are capable of experiencing -- using these, we can communicate with the range of an orchestra, rather than with the range of a single instrument.

### **Needs Inventory**

The Needs inventory lists examples of *universal human needs*. Notice the distinction between a need and a strategy to meet a need, e.g. "I need you to pick up pizza tonight" describes a *strategy* to get a *need* met ... not the actual need. Humans in general don't need pizza ... in fact, even specific humans don't need pizza ... and they certainly don't need 'you' to pick up the 'pizza'. In this case, the *universal human need* which the speaker is trying to express might be a need for *sustenance*, i.e. food. Or perhaps a need to *contribute* to the well-being of dinner guests. There are many possibilities. In giraffe-talk, we encourage language which focuses our attention on the universal human need, rather than on the strategy which we are proposing to use to meet that need. Hint: when identifying a need, ask whether or not a random person in Eastern Mongolia has this need ... if yes, then you've probably got a bona fide need in your hands ... if no ... then you're probably staring at a strategy intended to meet some as-yet unidentified need.

### **Life-Alienating Communication**

For most of this seminar, we have been practicing ways to communicate which *increase* the chances of everyone getting their needs met. This page describes ways to communicate which *decrease* the chances that anyone will get their needs met. I find it helpful to understand the potholes I can encounter, when learning to new task; that's why I include this page.