

USACE ERDC

Moderator: Julie Marcy
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Julie Marcy: Hello. I'm your host, Julie Marcy with the Engineer Research and Development Center's Environmental Lab in Vicksburg, Mississippi. I'll be assisted by (Courtney Chambers) also of the Environmental Lab.

Welcome to our joint Facilitator's Exchange and Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice webinar. Today, we're going to continue a series of presentations on conflict and collaborative problem solving.

We'll be focusing on difficult conversations from disagreements to bad news. Just a few notes before we begin the presentation. We've applied a global mute to the session because we have so many attendees. We've got a great receptive audience that's tuning in from across the U.S. and we want to be sure that we minimize any background noise for you. We are recording the Web meeting and will be posting the archived files, a PDF of the PowerPoint, the transcript and the video with narrated PowerPoint on the Facilitator's Exchange Web page archive and also on the Collaboration Community of Practice site.

If you have a question during the presentation while muted, you can use the chat feature on your screen to submit the question. We'll do most of the questions at the end of the presentation. We're going to reserve about the last 15 minutes to have questions and answers with our speakers.

When we're ready for that session, we'll return everyone to an interactive mode. Then, you'll be able to ask questions verbally or you can also use the chat feature. If you're having trouble being heard, you can also use the little raised hand icon so that we know to call upon you.

We'll cover as many questions as we can. If necessary, we'll arrange for some follow-up feedback for you if we don't have time for all of them. In order to have a more comprehensive list of attendees, if your sign in name doesn't show your full name or at least your last name and your organization, it would be very helpful if you could use chat and send that to myself, Julie Marcy, or to (Courtney Chambers) at this time.

If you're calling in as a group, if you can also indicate the number in your group, like IWR - five attendees, that would be very helpful.

Now, let me introduce today's speakers.

(Cynthia Wood) is an environmental planner for the Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources where she assists the Conflict Resolution and Public Participation Center of Expertise and the Regulatory program.

Before joining IWR in January of 2011, (Cynthia) spent 32 years in the Regulatory program working in enforcement, permit evaluation and policy sections of various core districts. She also served as a Corps instructor for over 20 years in developing and instructing courses and workshops on leadership, scope of analysis and permit review, communication, conflict resolution and collaboration.

(Andrea Carson) is a Stakeholder Engagement Fellow at the Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources. (Andrea) provides training for the

Corps and other agency representatives on conflict management, facilitation and communication skills. She supports staff in the field in the creation and implementation of public involvement plans and facilitates Corps initiatives such as environmental flow assessment workshops, watershed informed budgeting workshops and multi-hazard tournaments.

More information about (Andrea) and (Cynthia) can be found in their bios that are posted on the Facilitator's Exchange page and they were also in your Outlook invitation.

So (Cynthia) and (Andrea), we are very happy to have you with us today. I know no one tuning in has ever had to engage in a difficult conversation, but in case that ever happens, we know you're going to get us fixed up. I'm going to turn the program over to you now.

(Cynthia Wood): Thank you Julie. What is a difficult conversation for you? Is it asking that boss for a raise? Is it letting a coworker know that their bubblegum popping is bothering you to death?

Is it providing a coworker, family, friend that well-needed constructive feedback on their behavior or their performance? Or is it giving that bad news, telling an applicant that their permit is going to be denied or letting a sponsor know that the process has been delayed another three months?

What do you do when you're faced with a difficult conversation? Do you run away or ignore them only to let them fester? Or do you bulldoze right through, making sure your position prevails, not concerned too much about the damage left in your wake?

Let's face it, difficult conversations are inevitable so why not have them so that you're better prepared and more satisfied with the outcome? Sound like a plan? I'd say it's a good start for us here today and a key takeaway for the next hour?

Okay. Our key message for you is that successfully engaging in difficult conversations is a skill, whether that conversation is with applicants, agencies, different members of the public, coworkers, supervisors and with this skill you can successfully manage relationships and achieve results is what we want.

What you're going to learn today are some tools, techniques and strategies that will help you communicate assertively, make a request, discuss a disagreement in a productive way, provide feedback and deliver bad news and to be comfortable with these difficult conversations and move them in a productive direction.

So let's take a look at some of the communication styles. If we can look at a spectrum, that there are some people out there that are very good at expressing their needs and obtaining them sometimes in an aggressive tone. On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who are more concerned with the needs of others and are very passive in expressing their own wants and needs.

Now, speaking only in either an aggressive or passive voice will take tolls on relationships so where we need to be is somewhere in the middle. The assertive voice allows you to express your needs while taking the other person's needs into account as well.

Let's hear how all three of these voices sound. Let's take a look at the passive voice first. We will hear a lot of hedge words and a lot of apologies. We'll

hear a lot of excuses and excusing their own behavior and not being very assertive at all.

“I never done this before.” “I’m really not good at this.” “I’m sorry. It was my fault. I’m sure it was.” Okay. Let’s take a look at the aggressive voice. There’s no doubt you will recognize when you hear the aggressive voice in the room. Yes, you can even see the CAP letters as they tell you “I’m right. You’re wrong. And there’s no two ways about it.” They’ll get accusatory. You’ll get even potential threats. And about opinions, the only one that matters will be theirs.

Okay, now what I want you to do is hear the difference when you hear the assertive voice so I’m going to read just a few of these and tell me how you see the difference?

“Thanks for the suggestion. I’ll take that into consideration.” “I like this next one: “I think I understand what you’re saying AND I disagree.” In that example right there, you see that they have cared about the other person. They’ve taken the time to listen to that person but they’re still taking their own stand, what they feel.

So they’re not giving up anything. You’ll hear confidence and you’ll hear directness and that’s what you get with the assertive voice. Okay. Now we’re going to move onto where we can see how these different voices occur and the use of the assertive voice when we’re going into our first difficult conversation and that is making a request. (Andrea).

(Andrea Carson): Thank you (Cynthia). So when you’re making a request - for some of us we may put off making a request for weeks because we’re scared of what what we’re going to have to say or what we’re going to have to ask.

Because when we finally go and take that plunge and make that request, we end up leaving unfulfilled because darn it, we didn't say what we wanted to say. We didn't ask for enough. And then others, you may walk into the conversation feeling confident and telling that person what you think you deserve.

But you may not end up getting what you want because you've put that person off by assuming too much or being too aggressive. So there's a sweet in between for making requests that are heard and making requests that are appropriate.

So we're going to tell you how to do that. Similar to the examples I just gave, what you don't want to do is you don't want to make it a demand. Nor do you want to use passive language that can be brushed aside.

But what you do want to use is use that assertive voice that (Cindy) was talking about earlier. But beyond using the assertive voice, the way to make a strong request, there are two components.

The first is, ask is the question you're making is fair and if it makes sense to the person you're asking. By asking that question, you're opening up then that request to a conversation or a dialogue and so allowing that persons to perhaps tell you information that you weren't privy to before or learning something that will help you even strengthen your request.

Secondly, what you'll want to do is consider how them helping you helps their interests as well and articulate it that way. And so we're calling it the "what's in it for them."

By articulating how they can also further their interests by helping further yours, you're making it easier for them to say yes to your request. And so using these tips, this is actually going to be our first interactive component of the Webinar. We'd like you to think about how you would make a request to a particular situation.

We're going to be asking you to use the chat box for a second. But first we're going to give you an example of how not to make a request. The scenario that we're going to use is asking a supervisor to be considered for a detail at headquarters.

What you don't want to say is, "I had better be considered for this detail." What you also don't want to say is to take the passive voice and say, "Well, maybe I could go on this detail, if you have no one else in mind, that is." You don't want to ask that question either put in that way.

Rather what you want to do is ask it assertively and make it a conversation. So we're going to ask you all to do now on the Webinar. Type in your chat boxes what you think you should say instead using the tips that we've discussed about making a request.

So if you can take a second to chat that in now, we'd appreciate it. Oh yes, and make sure that you select everyone in the chat box so that we can all see your response. As you're typing it, keep mindful of the tips: Asking if that request makes sense and putting in the "what's in it for them".

And it's more appropriate if you have the information, be as specific as possible. So, stating the who, the what, and the when, if there's a deadline or

something involved to make sure that that request is full and complete and clear.

So we'll give you another second or two. "I'd really like to go on this detail and this is what I think I can bring (to the table)". So maybe outlining what those things are. "I think I'd be well qualified for." And, the chat box is moving very fast. "A great opportunity bringing in the IDP." It's something you can fall back on and it's clearly something you've built together so that will help.

That's great. Okay. "And helpful to our brand" and so bringing that in and bringing it back to our group, right. So making that connection between the two. So very, very well played. One of the things that we wanted to, we just put as a suggestion is the following. "I would like to discuss this opportunity for me to do a detail at headquarters..." so bringing up the discussion in the first place.

"We did add it to my IDP" so someone hit that right on the mark and "from what I understand, I'd be working on a new policy that will have value for us here." So again, the "what's in it for them", bringing it back. And then finally asking the question, "what do you think?"

And this is opening up a dialogue, asking does it make sense. But you'll also see that throughout this whole statement, there's not a lot of uncertainty. It's put as a statement. But we DO ask that question at the end to bring in that further dialogue. So thank you all for participating.

The next thing that we're going to now do is teach you how to use this assertive voice in even more difficult conversations. So having a productive disagreement. (Cindy's) actually going to walk you through this next part.

(Cynthia Wood): Okay. For many of us, when we get into a disagreement, we just want to state our position and we want to state our objective and that is for the other side just to agree with us.

Unfortunately, the other side has that same objective. So in those type of disagreements, it could look like something like this” A tug of war going on. I’m right. No, I’m right. Or, it could be the pointing of the fingers or talking over each other, not getting a word in edgewise.

The first place to start if you want to have a productive conversation and a disagreement is to shift the purpose of the conversation. What you will find by shifting the purpose from trying to get the other person to see your side to trying for an opportunity for mutual learning, what you might get is more of what you wanted in the first place.

Start by doing this. First, learn their story. Hear their side of it. Then express your views. Get your side out there. Then where you’re going is to develop a third story, bringing it all together and getting the full picture. And then be able to move onto a problem solving solution.

So I’m going to give you a couple of steps. First, start with this invitation. Invite this person you’re having this disagreement with, invite them into a conversation and state what your purpose is for the discussion. You want to understand their perspective better. You want them to understand yours. And that you want to come to some kind of a solution that you all can live with.

That can disarm them right from the beginning. To understand their story, you have to understand you do not need to give up anything. You don’t. When

you're understanding somebody you're not necessarily agreeing with them. You're just saying, I understand where you're coming from.

And one way that can help you is move from certainty like, I know I'm right, I mean even if you are right. Move from that and to curiosity. This can help you. Instead of asking and hopefully it stays in your head, "How can they think that?" Move it to, "I wonder what information they have that I don't."

And if you listen carefully, you may find out what information you have that they didn't. Also, instead of asking, how can they be so irrational try wondering, how they see the world? What is their view of the world that makes what they think makes sense. Try to get in their shoes.

Listening to understand takes work but it also, I need to remind some folks they need this permission again and I will repeat it, that there is a difference from understanding somebody and agreeing with them. You can say, I get what you're saying and I disagree with you.

So it's not giving up anything to listen to understand. The second component and I find it very challenging for me is something call active listening. And it's to listen to somebody and then to give them feedback that you really did listen to where they can actually say "Exactly, that's exactly what I meant."

Discussions like this can get you going by saying, "Let me make sure I got this right..." And then repeat. Paraphrase what they said. "So what you're saying is...", and if you practice this then what you're really doing is practicing active listening.

Active listening is a skill and I don't know how many of you have heard this before but you will find in a difficult conversation when the stakes are high,

the skill of active listening becomes critical. And I will tell you that sometimes it's easier to teach this than to do it.

So I need to get some help and I'm going to elicit the help of (Raymond) and his family to teach us the value of active listening. And as you watch this clip, I want you to pick out what (Raymond) does to help transform this disagreement and move it into resolution.

((VIDEO))

(Andrea Carson): Thanks for your patience with that and glad you appreciate a little bit of humor. So now what we will ask is, what is your takeaway from this video? What techniques did (Raymond) use in active listening that helped him deescalate the situation and really help each of his family members recognize their interests?

You can type that in the chat box now. We'll start to collect the different techniques that you saw for active listening. "Summarizing what each person is saying." "Re-stating underlying needs." Oh, we have some phrasing, "what you're saying is..." Great. Are there any others that we have? We have from rephrasing. We have some, "they both feel unappreciated," right.

So what really (Raymond) allows them to do is get past their own convictions to really get to their interests, right? And so he did that. Some of you mentioned that in the summarizing, he indicated that he was listening by summarizing without judgement.

And so we even heard his mom say, "well that's right!" And that's what (Cindy) was saying. If you can get to a (place where you're) saying "exactly,"

then you're at a good place where you're summarizing. And you might also notice (Raymond) was asking questions.

And he was asking questions to assure that he was understanding. And that's a large part of active listening. It's listening for that additional information so that folks can put everything out on the table and arrive at those interests rather than (opposing) positions.

You might also notice that there is an intensity of the conversation, right? And so (Raymond) was able to match that intensity as he was summarizing and not sweeping under the rug but really putting a name to his intense feelings. You know, under appreciation is heavy and so he was able to name that as well.

And yes, he facilitated the conversation somewhat. Exactly. And that what's active listening allows you to do. It's a listening component that also is very much of a questioning and a facilitation component as well. So thank you all for participating.

And so what we're hoping you do is as you think about active listening, and this is a skill you can use in many different situations, especially though in a difficult conversation. Because really it's about, as (Cindy) was saying, making sure that that other person feels heard.

And so, you want to practice those skills especially when there's a need to participate anger or help others understand the interests behind the conditions. So thank you for that.

(Andrea Carson): Okay, moving forward now, we've talked a little bit about, helping otherstell their story. But now, you're in a conversation and you want to be able to share your part as well to create that whole understanding.

And so the way that you can make sure that others understand your story is by telling a good distinct story. And so the different components are if you can be direct and speak to your opponents as clearly as possible and deliver it constantly.

So using that assertive language. But also be brief. And I think that a lot of times when we get in a difficult situation we kind of want to throw a bunch of words at it, you know, dive into the story. Give extra details because we're nervous.

But really what that does is brings up a bunch of other issues that weren't in the boundary of that initial conversation. So keeping it as brief and as distinct as possible, without those extra details can really go a long way.

You also want to provide reasons. And in many instances, facts over opinions seem to go very far because then you're discussing tangible items, something happened rather than the opinions of others that have been interpreted. So trying not to bring those opinions up.

And we'll actually do an exercise next about how best to provide those reasons and what you're feeling and how to bring those into a discussion. And then finally, balance. This also gets back to that assertive voice where you're talking through a voice, you know, you're showing that you value yourself equal to others.

Because if you're trying to tell your story but you're scared to tell your story or that the other person's intimidating you or, you don't know how to put a voice to what you're experiencing, then you're shortcutting yourself and really that's not helpful to either party in the situation.

So those are some ways in order to make sure that you can help them understand your story. And so we're going to practice providing the reasons and we actually, I see a suggestion for what to do if the other person shuts down completely, and we'll actually discuss that at the end of the conversation.

So (Courtney) if you can kind of remind us to come back, that would be great. All right. So here's a way to deliver the reasons and feelings behind a conversation that you're going to have and it's called an "I statement."

So the "I statement" is a method of communication that will essentially allow and is a vehicle to help you express your feelings in a way that will lessen the likelihood of provoking and negative response in your listener.

Because the "I statement" avoids blaming others through your emotions and also is an effective way to let someone know that their behavior is causing a problem without having them feel guilty or resentful that you're explaining it to them.

So an example of an "I statement" is here on the screen. "I feel hurt when you forget to call because it seems like you don't care." So sit with that for a second and we're going to breakdown the "I statement" a little bit further to help you learn how to craft one on your own.

The "I statement" has four parts. The "I" "feel", "when" and "because." And so we'll break that down. we first have the "I". Fairly simple to say "I". It's easy to say, "my concern is..." but "I" is the stronger way to say that. And you want to say what you feel.

So you're going to name that emotion. So in the sentence, in the instance before, we showed, "I feel hurt" for that, the emotion that you're feeling. And then the third step is the condition or behavior that caused your feeling.

So "I feel hurt when you forget to call." So that's the action that's happening. And then finally the impact, the effect the behavior's having on you. And so sometimes this impact may be an assumption that you're drawing from that and you can state that as an assumption.

So, "I feel hurt when you forget to call because it seems as if you don't care." Or, "because my impression is that you don't care." So you can state it in a way that says this is how it's affecting you and this is how you're interpreting that effect whether it's true or not but it's recognizing how you feel.

So let's think about that a little bit further. Here's some examples of "I statements" because I know this is kind of a heavy list. So if someone's leaving clothes lying around the floor, if it's your kid, if it's your significant other and it's been happening quite often you might say something wrong like, "you're so inconsiderate leaving your clothes lying around on the floor for me to pick up!"

So what's going to happen if you say that to them? If it is a significant other, they may get defensive. They may yell back. They may say, "you leave your clothes on the floor all the time too." Or if it's your child, they may just roll their eyes. But either way, you're not getting the result that you want.

So using the "I statement" may actually help you do that better. Try this on for size. "I feel annoyed when you leave your clothes on the floor instead of putting them in the hamper because then I feel it becomes my responsibility to pick them to keep the house clean."

Now we're going to take one step further. And tell me what you hear or what the difference is between this one and the current one. "I feel annoyed when clothes are left on the floor instead of putting them in the hamper because then I feel it becomes my responsibility to pick them up."

And so what we just did here was we took out even the "you" in this statement and it defuses the situation just by taking out "when you leave your clothes on the floor" to having it, "when the clothes are left on the floor." So if you think about that level of change, how much that just disarms the person that you're talking to, to be effective.

And here's some other examples that will help you with some context on how to use this. "I hate when you interrupt me from talking. You're so disrespectful." Or if someone's interrupting you, what's a more constructive way to say that?

"I feel disrespected when I'm interrupted and not able to finish my thought. So it makes it seem what I have to say doesn't matter." So truly given the why behind that as well which I think carries a lot of weight and power.

And finally, when thinking about "I statements", sometimes you're not addressing one person in particular. But an "I statement" is rather a better way to frame how you're seeing a situation or you're seeing the world. So here's an example of that.

"Working in this place is impossible. No one supports me and I can watch this company go down the tube." Rather if you said, "I find it very difficult working here when I was told that I would receive the support I need to do a

job well because I care about the quality of our products and I care about the future of this organization.”

So it really shows your interest tied to this feeling and how it helps a certain behavior such as when you're not receiving support really can affect how you're feeling. So this is a great way to open up a conversation.

This isn't the end of a conversation but rather this kind of feeling, this is the behavior and let's discuss further how we can fix it. So now what we want to do is actually have you write an "I statement" of your own. So here is the situation we're going to propose to you all to think about:

“Another coworker breaks their promise and didn't follow through with their part of the agreement to complete the work. How does this make you feel?”
What would you say to this person about how it's making you feel using an “I statement”?

So if you want to take a couple of moments now to either-if you can type in the chat box that would be preferable but if you want to scratch it out on any paper you have beside you, that would be helpful as well. We'll see what we come up with.

I see someone else suggests that when clothes are left on the floor it's a tripping hazard to grandma. Everyone loves grandma. That's a great way to phrase that. And I see, so please pick them up is kind of really a desired outcome and that's actually, we're going to talk in a few slides about how to get feedback and really illicit a new kind of behavior or outcome. So (Diane), you're already ahead of the game.

Okay, do we have any “I statements” for this? “Another coworker breaks their promise and didn’t follow through with their part of the agreement to complete the work. How does this make you feel?” (Dane) says, “I feel frustrated when you didn’t complete your part of the work because now I have to do your part.”

“Disappointed that the project cannot be completed.” Disappointed is a great word. “On time”, right. So it’s not even about you. It’s about the time and already you want to know what can be done to complete the action. So that’s great. So that’s taking a proactive approach to using an “I statement”.

And really what I already like about the way you are using is the “I statement” is it’s a great model. And you can always change how you’re saying it or how you use it. And make it your own. But keeping the kind of the framework behind it of the “I” instead of the “you” and the blaming.

All right. So I’m just going to offer up one or two of the ones that we had said, we again, we used disappointed. So ” I felt frustrated when you were weren’t able to meet our agreement because now means that we’re going to lose our next contract”, or something along those lines could be one that you use as well.

Perfect, Thank you all for practicing. I hope that was useful to you. And so again, practice makes perfect so the more you think about it and even if you’re going to have to talk to someone about it, maybe practice writing it out first could really be useful.

All right. Now I’m going to move on to (Cindy) so she can tell you the rest of how to have a productive disagreement.

(Cynthia Wood): In any disagreement, there are two sides to the story. So now that you know both sides, you've listened to them and now you've gotten your message out, it's time to create that third story. This is the full picture.

It's now time to drop the finger pointing and the blame game and consider what each of you are bringing to the table, what each of you have brought to contribute to the situation at hand.

You also want to look at it if you need help as a bystander would see it, looking down and being able to see maybe who did what and where and all that. And then start talking about what could be changed and then how to move forward.

There's always, you know, time to blame but now it's time to move on. So what you want to do is you don't want to talk any more about who's right or wrong. You've gotten that out. Now you try to pick the pieces in how to move forward.

So moving forward to the problem solving stage, realize that it takes two to agree so at every step you want to make sure you're in agreement. Gather information and test any of the perceptions that you may have.

And then invent options. And then also, if you still can't agree, consider alternatives. Sometime it may be that you agree to disagree. But if you've heard each other, the one thing after this disagreement, you may not have reached a solution but you haven't a damaged relationship.

Now we're moving onto giving feedback. This is another type of difficult conversation and with this I'm going to hand it back over to Andrea.

(Andrea): So keep in mind that feedback can address the positive and negative behaviors. So I think oftentimes, the ones that we're really uncomfortable with is when we're addressing the negative behavior. And so that's what we're going to speak to today.

And so what (Cindy) and I are going to do, is first give an example of feedback that does not go so well. And so the scenario that I will be addressing with (Cindy) is that (Cindy) sits beside me at work. And every day after lunch she pops her bubblegum.

And it's becoming distracting to me. And so I'm going to – exactly. I'm going to address (Cindy) now and give her my feedback. (Cindy).

(Cynthia Wood): What?

(Andrea): You've got to stop popping that gum.

(Cynthia Wood): Excuse me.

(Andrea): You do it all the time.

(Cynthia Wood): Whoa.

(Andrea): You know this bothers everyone in the office. And I know that you do it on purpose.

(Cynthia Wood): Chill.

(Andrea): If you do it one more time, I think I'm going to go crazy.

(Cynthia Wood): Like this? POP

(Andrea): So the question really remains that if you were to address someone, giving feedback in that way- that immediate, that guttural I-haven't-thought-about-it-and-I-just-need-you-to-stop-this reaction, if I were addressing her that way in the office, would (Cindy) actually stop chewing her gum? Probably not considering she's continued popping it right in my ear right here.

So, we're trying to find a way to really help give feedback and the behavioral changes that really are affecting work relationships, home relationships. And so we're going to give you some tips on how to do that better.

To do this, we're going to give you another scenario and actually walk you through the steps for building productive feedback. And so the scenario we're going to work from is, "you are a team lead and one of your team members has been chronically late to your weekly team meeting." What do you do? What do you say?

The first step to giving productive feedback is asking permission to give feedback, somewhere along the lines of these bullets here. "Can I give you some feedback?" "Can I share an observation with you?" "There's an observation I have. Can I share it with you?"

And so the response for this scenario we suggest would be something along the lines of, "can we talk about what's happened at the beginning of our weekly team meeting?" So opening it up for that conversation. And if they say "no" or they don't want to hear it, maybe there's a better time. Because if they're not going to be open to that conversation, then already you're down the path of an unproductive conversation.

And so perhaps consider setting a time, another time or place to have that conversation because you want the recipient ready and comfortable to receive that feedback. The next step is stating the purpose of the feedback. And the reason you want to state the purpose is you want to start with intent and not content.

And really what this helps you do is establish kind of a little bit of a safety net and helps disarm them a little bit. And so you're showing that by articulating your purpose that you care about their best interests and goals so that you have a mutual purpose and that you care about them so there's mutual respect there as well.

And so, you can use something along the lines of what we have here. "You know my intention is not to micromanage or criticize you. My intention is actually to work towards a better solution and to figure out how we can work better."

And so here are two different responses that you could have here. One is following, you know the step model and one not. So the first thing, "let's just talk about how you can make the most of time together at the meeting."

Or, if you want to use intention or not intention, "my intention is not to micromanage. My intentions are to set expectations of how we can work better together." And so opening up that dialogue and letting them know what kind of conversation you're going to be having.

That is not pointing fingers. It's not to punish. It's not to blame but really to discuss. The next step then is using this situation behavior in models to deliver the actual content of your feedback. And so the situation is where you're reminding the person of the situation that you're recalling.

Behavior is objectively describing the specific behavior and when we say objective, it would be what a third party watching the situation would be able to see and comment on. Using numbers.

Using specifics will go a lot farther than being very vague in what you're talking about because then it will be less controversial, more persuasive and less insulting, if you're using stats, rather than insinuations or opinions.

And then finally, you have the impact. So you're going to describe the impact on yourself and on the organization. So here's an example of how that might carry out in our situation.

"The past three team meetings, you've walked in ten minutes late causing us to start the meetings over which means we do not get through all the content and are not on the same page." And so we have a situation, that's three meetings. You can even be more specific.

"The three morning meetings" or "You've talked in ten minutes late." And then the impact being, "you're starting the meeting over."

So after you deliver that feedback, you're going to want to pause and let them respond. Perhaps they're going to say, "oh my goodness. You know, I'm so sorry. It won't happen again." Or, "yes, I'm having trouble with my dog or the kids didn't get on the bus." Or whatever it is. You want to let them have that space to be able to respond.

But ultimately what really matter is that you're going to listen empathetically. You're going to really listen. You're going to have that conversation. But at the end you're going to wrap up by articulating your desired outcome. There's

a reason that you're getting this feedback because there's a behavior that you'd like to start, change, continue, whatever it is, you need to be able to clearly articulate that.

And so in this scenario, we suggest you might hear something along the lines of, "from now on I'd like you to arrive on time to team meetings. Is there any reason why this is not a reasonable request?" So for some people saying, "I'd like you to arrive on time to the team meetings" is what feels aggressive. It would be hard for me to say.

By asking, you can something along the lines of, "if you can try to arrive to staff meetings on time," that might be a little more comfortable as well. And that's okay. You're still stating your desired outcome.

And asking the question, "is this a reasonable request" is getting back to making requests in the first place, right? You're asking, "is this appropriate" and "is this okay". So moving onto from that, what we would actually challenge you to do is to actually give, practice giving feedback on your own.

And we're not going to do that here today but we're going to give you some homework. And so that homework is going to be- it can be either positive or addressing a positive or a negative behavior sometime in the next week with any of your coworkers and see how it feels. See how it sits with you.

And, you might have some insights into how hard it is to actually give productive feedback or perhaps how useful this really is if you can put it to the test. So wrapping up, we're going to go over one other type of difficult conversation to have and (Cindy's) going to lead us through that.

(Cynthia Wood): We've all had to do it. We've all had to be the bearer of bad news, you know, letting the family know that you're not going to make it home for Christmas, breaking off a relationship.

I know my job in regulatory, some of the hardest times was to tell an applicant their permit was going to be denied. Or that somebody, a very concerned citizen, telling them that we're going to issue a permit over their objection. These are hard things to do but whether at home or at office, when it's time to give the bad news, we can't run and hide.

In fact the author of *Difficult Conversations* said it best. "Delivering bad news is like throwing a hand grenade. Coded with sugar, throwing it hard or soft, a hand grenade is still going to do damage. Try as you may, there's no way of throwing it with tack or outrunning the consequences.

And keeping it to yourself is no better. Or choosing not to deliver the difficult message is like hanging on to a hand grenade once you've pulled the pin." So what can we do to ease the damage, the potential damage?

Well, we can look at some of these tips. You know, you've been hearing this over and over from the beginning about first off, use the assertive voice. And secondly, most important is timing. Make sure you're timely when you're giving it. The sooner the better.

Bad news is not like wine. It does not get better with age. And the fourth bullet is very important. Don't measure the success of how well you've delivered bad news by how or if the person got upset or angry. Give them the space to do that and that's what bad news is.

And then show them that you do care. And if there's any way helping them go forward, giving reasonable alternatives or anything, you know, asking if there's anything else you can do can be definitely helpful in these times.

We're kind of running out of time here. And wanted to at least hit on our key points and that is, disagreements, we'll have them. Difficult conversations. But this first point is try to understand where the other person is coming from and showing that empathy because what you want to do is deescalate the conflict that can occur.

And then also using these different techniques and tools that we've talked about very briefly and understand that we could have done an hour brown bag on any one of those. So go ahead and explore these on your own. There's plenty of information out on the internet.

And also the resources that we used to prepare these slides is our last slide here showing you where you can learn more.

(Andrea): So if you're interested in learning more, please feel free to check out these resources. These are some great books as well as some articles about that and there's even some additional training, if you're interested in that as well. And so feel free to Google these, even click on the link later. We can provide that for you.

So with that, we want to thank you all for listening. Hopefully you've at least taken some nuggets back that you can practice on your own for having you know, more productive difficult conversations and we'll open up the conversation for - we'll open up the conversation now for questions.

Operators: Okay. All participants are now in interactive talk mode.

Julie Marcy: Thank you (Courtney), (Andrea) and (Cynthia). This is Julie. Why don't we go ahead and use the chat feature for our questions? We have over 80 folks on the line and I think that will be a little more orderly.

We'll start with our first question in chat and that is, what do you do if the other person shuts down and leaves while you're trying to have a difficult conversation?

(Cynthia Wood): It's always going to be in the timing of when you have the conversation. And it's not just, it's not just going to be your time. It's also theirs. I would say respect that.

If they're walking away, respect that first but do some kind of follow-up and say, I really need to talk to you. Can you give me a good time to discuss this? At least give them that chance to have that second conversation because it may not have been a good time for them.

I have come across people who won't share with you things going on in their personal life and it might have been a good time for you to give them the feedback but you didn't know maybe their child is undergoing a surgery. Or, they're maybe going through a divorce.

So, respect that and give them the benefit of the doubt at least that first go around.

Julie Marcy: Thank you (Cindy). I hear some background noise on the line. If you're not talking, please do a local mute on your phone line to help us.. Any other questions that folks have please go ahead and type them into chat and we'll get them addressed.

Courtney Chambers: Julie, there were a few that were sent.

Julie Marcy: Okay, go ahead (Courtney).

Courtney: First, they're curious about the slides. They want to know where we can get those.

(Julie Marcy): Yes, we're going to have a PDF of the slides available on the Facilitator's Exchange. That was in the opening page. And then we'll also be putting it in the collaboration community to practice as well.

Courtney: Great. I did see one other. It's kind of a comment or suggestion possibly. Back to that I statement, they wanted to know if I think is better than I feel, maybe it's more professional versus use in a personal communication? Is that a rule, (Cynthia) or (Andrea)?

(Andrea): So in teaching this concept a few times, I've also gotten a lot of pushback from people saying "I feel" is quite difficult for people. And so you can saysomething along the lines of "I think that I am getting frustrated." That might be a way to say something along those lines.

Because depending whatever follows, "I think" still needs to be something that you're experiencing. And so it's not an opinion that you're necessarily trying to convey. So saying something along the lines of "I think that I", or you can also say, instead of "I feel", "my concern is."

You can also do it that way because it's still taking it on from your perspective and what you're experiencing.

(Cynthia Wood): I have something to add. As we were, developing these slides and working through some of the discussion, my husband has a way of spraying water when he dries his hands at the kitchen sink. And it gets over paper and mail.

So I did my very practiced, aggressive voice and said, "I wish you'd stop that. I don't know why you do that. You just do that to tick me off, don't you?" And he said oh. And the little voice in the back of my mind said, "I statement. I statement."

So after the fact, I went to my husband and I asked him. I said, if I were to tell you, it really annoys me when you spray your hands like that because the mail gets wet and some of it can be important, would you respond differently?

And he said absolutely. So the moral of that story, even though I may like to say I think and this is what I know, that I realize now that a lot of people respond better with this I statement.

So what I would say and suggest to the person that asked that question, practice it and try it out. And see if you get a different result in the relationships you currently have.

(Andrea): You can also say, "I get really anxious" rather than "I feel". It's the feel word that may be making you kind of haveuncomfortable. "I get" or "I am" allows you to state in another way as well.

(Cynthia Wood): I use "get."

Julie Marcy: Okay, (Courtney), did you have any additional questions in your chat?

Courtney: That's all I'm seeing right now.

Julie Marcy: Okay, if anyone else has more questions go ahead and put them in the chat.

(Andrea): Also, it looks like we've had some great suggestions from the field as well about different things. So you can learn a lot. It's going fast on our screen but pointing to the chat box and seeing what others also have to suggest as well.

Julie Marcy: We have another one in chat from (Judy). Getting helpful advice from her mother, but she has a very blunt delivery and isn't asking if she's receptive to feedback at the time. How can she and her mother work on their communication? What could she say or ask of her to try to change her delivery or the timing of her delivery in giving advice?

(Cynthia Wood): There's an excellent book out there and maybe we should add it to this last slide. And it's called Thanks for the Feedback. And it talks about feedback being a two-way street. It's not only teaching folks how to give it. It's also how to receive it.

And this would help, this would actually help not only the mother but the daughter in knowing even when it comes bluntly, it still is valuable insight. However, when you continually get it that way, I don't care who you are, you're going to have a little bit of resentment to it.

The best thing to do is after reading the book, have the book laying around the house. If the mother can read it, maybe they can share together. This is a very good opportunity in relationships where people can understand the value of feedback.

And telling the mom, even giving the mom feedback, you know, mom, I love, using an I statement, I love the way you care about me but it does make me get a little un-nerved the way you deliver it. Can we talk about that?

So using that whole third-story thing. But having that book or having a resource and getting the mom kind of up-to-speed on the same terms and things can maybe help. You have anything (Andrea)?

(Andrea): I mean I also think, if the delivery is blunt, you can say “can I share something with you?” And, say something along the lines of, “I tend to put my guard up when you’re telling me something to do and it is not really helping me actually do something.”

“So, it’d be much easier, could you possibly not deliver this quite as bluntly or just phasing it in different ways so, you know, I could be more receptive to it?”

Because essentially, if I’m giving you feedback or you want me to do something, then by telling them (the person giving the feedback) “it actually makes me put my guard up and not want to do it then” by saying... “if you can do this differently” and suggest a way to do it because it will actually help me respond better then, you know, then you’re not attacking them at all. You’re just asking them for a favor. So that’s how I might say something like that.

Julie Marcy: This is Julie again. Perhaps related to that is another question: What are some tips for communicating with people who have a condescending or aggressive tone?

(Andrea): Well (Cindy), I’m going to let you take that one.

(Cynthia Wood): I'm telling you, sometimes it is easier to teach than to do and it is a struggle. The condescending people with condescending tone, it is an aggressive voice and unless they take a training class and they learn that they're not as effective as they may think or rather they could be more effective if they could tone it down, this would be feedback that you would want to give that person.

And again, give it in a way that would tell them how it affects you, not everybody. Don't bring the whole room into this. Just how it affects you and they could be more effective if they could deliver it in a less aggressive tone. You don't want to use the word condescending because that has a negative connotation but in an aggressive tone.

Even using the passive aggressive. Just say I think I would accept it better. Maybe other people would as well.

(Andrea): I that would be quite difficult to actually be able to give that feedback openly so that that would have to be more a delicate response.

(Cynthia Wood): I will tell you what not to do, is what my daughter told me when she thought I was being condescending. She said, mom, I think they should change your name to CondeCindy.

(Andrea): Oh boy.

(Cynthia Wood): I said, I like that.

Julie Marcy: That was clever. And another comment in chat. You mentioned some recommended training. Is there a particular training course either within the Corps or outside of the Corps where folks can learn more about difficult conversations?

(Andrea): Yes, so actually I recently attended one in D.C. that was given by GovLoop. You'll see the source of the course on the link in the webinar. So actually if you click, how to have courageous – you can't click. I will put it in the chat box so it links, how to have courageous conversations.

And within there, there was actually someone who came in from another organization who generally teaches these courses. So I can offer, you can find that link to that course through there. I'll provide that for you.

Julie Marcy: Great. This is Julie again. What we may want to do is if you have that link or any additional links, if you all want to send those to me as a Word document, I'll add that to our archived meeting files so we can have all of the information in one location.

(Cynthia Wood): And I will add that book, Thanks for the Feedback and along with a YouTube clip. The book is a little wordy to get through it all. And what these authors did and they were the same authors of Difficult Conversations, they did an hour presentation and what they did is they completely condensed the book into that hour presentation and did a very good job. So I would almost say if nothing else, look at that YouTube. It's very good and with very good information.

Julie Marcy: We've had another question and comment on chat. Women are often accused of being too emotional, even Elizabeth Warren is accused of being too emotional or angry. And, many women are also known to apologize. Might women fall into this communication trap, lack of respect, if they use feeling language in public settings? What are your thoughts on that?

(Cynthia Wood): I'll go back to assertive voice. Assertive voice is gender neutral. And we were talking about those words. Like I feel angry when you do X, Y and Z. I get frustrated when you do X, Y and Z.

I wouldn't, I don't think there's a problem using it. I do think it is in the sound, if you're passive in how you say it. And if you think you're doing the I statements, reread what you just said and see if there aren't some hedge words in there.

(Andrea): But if you are, I mean if you're really seeking to get feedback, what is nice about the words that we provided is that it's not feeling based. It's the behavior and this is the impact that behavior is having.

So in many instances, you know, you can consider using that if you're looking for a little bit more of a fact base instead of saying, "I'm experiencing X, Y and Z And this is, an impact it's having on me or the organization" and so that may be another way to deliver some of those things, if you need to.

Julie Marcy: Our time is growing short, but I have a couple of others that have come in that we'll just mention. (Michael) and (Mike) noted that in Louisville District the Leadership Development II class had an instructor cover many of these techniques. So (Michael) and (Mike) if you can send me, Julie Marcy, that person's name, then we can make folks aware of additional resources they may have.

The last question is, how can I statements be tailored for uniform service members within the Corps who must communicate serious business to very senior Army and DOD leadership? Any special tips for working with or communication with high level military folks and senior Army and DOD?

(Cynthia Wood): Good question. I still go back to the using the assertive voice. The I statement, I mean don't get too caught up with the word where it says emotion. It's just an emotion or behavior whatever it is that you're having, while you're having the conversation, something's either getting you upset, angry, concerned, frustrated or whatever.

Maybe it's how you invite that conversation. I want to bring something to your attention because I know you care about this installation. Bring it always back to the goal but again, stating it in an assertive way, I don't see you going wrong with using that same combination.

(Andrea): And if you look at the third example on the "I statements", what we did actually because I wanted to show a more generalized instead of using the emotions, it was "I find it really difficult here, working here when I'm told I will not receive support."

So in that case it was not emotion based. "I'm experiencing this when this happened." So that also is a better way I think to say that. If you use (Cindy's) introduction of, "I want to discuss something with you because I know this is important to you" and then you go into this, "I find something difficult" or "I'm experiencing this," then that's a great way to kind of take it again and using the assertive voice as (Cindy) said.

Julie Marcy: Well (Andrea) and (Cynthia), thank you so much for all of your hard work in sharing your expertise and gathering this information for us. We can tell from the number of folks that were interested in the presentation that it's very timely and needed by many folks across our organization. We really appreciate you presenting it.

In chat (Andrea) also provided the link for that GovLoop, courageous conversations information. And earlier, I posted the url for where the archived presentation will be posted. (Andrea) and (Cynthia), do you have any last comments for the group before we end?

(Andrea): No, thank you all for attending and if you have any additional questions, feel free to contact us.

Julie Marcy: (Courtney), thank you so much for helping us as well. Thank you participants for tuning in and be watching your Outlook inbox for information on our upcoming Webinars. We have quite a few in the works that we're trying to finalize and we'll be getting those invitations out to you.

(Andrea): And Julie ...

Julie Marcy: Yes.

(Andrea): When the Webinars are posted, could we send them out on SharePoint so they know to look for it?

Julie Marcy: Sure.

(Andrea): Okay. That will be great putting it on SharePoint.

Julie Marcy: Typically, we'll get the PowerPoint posted pretty rapidly, along with the video. Then, it takes a little longer for us to edit and post the transcript.

Thank you everyone for attending and thank you (Michael) and (Mike) for sending the LDP instructor information. That will conclude our session.