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## BE CURIOUS – AND BE A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATOR

There are many ways to improve the way you communicate. For example, you will always start things off on the right foot by opening the conversation in a way that creates mutual respect. Using phrases such as, "If you have a minute, I'd like to talk with you about something that I think will improve the way we work together," helps set your conversation partner at ease. It tells him or her that you have positive intentions. It is also important to know your purpose for the conversation. Some purposes are more useful than others. A useful purpose is one you have power over. For instance, you can control your own reaction; you can share your view; learn about your partner's view; work toward a sustainable solution. On the other hand, examples of purposes that are NOT useful are: trying to change the other person; attempting to control their reaction; or going in with a hidden agenda. **Be Interested** Of the many ways to improve your conversation skills, one of the best is to be interested. **Curiosity is one of the most useful tools in the communication toolbox.** When you enter the conversation with "beginner's mind," you will necessarily adopt the attitude of a learner. You will not have to pretend to ask honest, open questions. They will come naturally. As you listen, you can reflect on what is being said (and not said). You will gain information and ease tension. If you can't think of a question, you can always acknowledge what you've heard, or you can say: "I see, tell me more about that." One of the reasons we're not curious more often is that **we mentally equate curiosity with agreement.** We think that if we don't disagree immediately, our conversation partner will assume we're okay with whatever he is saying. This is not useful thinking. It prevents you from seeing the whole picture and from learning where your partner is coming from. The next time you find yourself in a difficult conversation, give yourself and your partner a gift by asking questions - questions to which you do not know the answer. Watch what happens. You will learn a lot, and you will feel more powerful, not less. Remember – listening does not equal agreement. It means you are a skilled and active learner, a good partner, and a conscious communicator. Live, learn, and enjoy the moment. Good luck and good communication!

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