

**AAHPERD 2012 BOSTON
MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION &
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

**Dr. Christine Lottes lottes@kutztown.edu
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania**

INTRODUCTION

- A key to effective communication is *preparation*.
- Overview of the session.

COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

- Individuals: calm, rested, feel safe, feel cared about:

- Men and women can be unique in their communication:

- Things that make conflict worse (Dr. Scott Stanley):
 1. Withdraw:

 2. Escalate:

 3. Invalidate:

 4. Negative interpretation:

- Ground Rules for communicating effectively:
 1. Time out:

 2. Structured time together:

 3. Communication Tool:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Matthew 7:12 The Bible

Seek first to understand, Then to be understood. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey. (7 Habits books also available for Kids, Teens & Families.)

SIX-STEP MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communicating effectively can be extremely challenging. All of us, from time to time, encounter someone whose behaviors cause us to be concerned. You can see a problem, but you're not sure how serious it is or if you should become involved. In order to help, you never need to be able to make a diagnosis or be responsible for that person's behavior. There are however 6 simple steps you can take to be sure that you are doing what's best for this individual and for yourself. By taking the time to show you care, you may be able to positively influence behavioral change.

Before you begin: **List** behaviors you have observed. Make your list as specific and concrete as possible. For example, rather than saying "Bill seems to have a problem" it is more effective to say "Bill was not prepared for the committee meeting on rewriting our mission statement and got into a shouting match with Sarah."

Step 1: I care... Tell the person you are concerned and care about him/her. Expression of concern can be difficult, but it is vital.

Step 2: I see... Share your list of behaviors that concern you. What have you seen? What did s/he do or say? What have you heard? It is important that this be done in an objective, non-judgmental manner. Stress **behaviors**.

Step 3: I feel... Tell the person how you feel. "I'm *worried* that you're going to lose your job", "I'm *angry* that you didn't keep your promise to me", "I'm *concerned* about the effect your behavior is having on your reputation." Stress your feelings.

Step 4: Listen. A variety of responses can be expected. Many will say nothing, as they are not ready to talk. Some may become angry and tell you it's none of your business. They may point out that you do the same thing they do. Defensiveness is very common. Stick to your agenda. Others may share with you a problem that is beyond your ability to help. By listening carefully, you will be able to move on to steps 5 and 6.

Step 5: I want... State your expectations clearly. "I want you to come to work on time", "I want you to be prepared for meetings", "I want you to see a counselor about anger".

Step 6: I will... Tell the person what you are willing to do to help him/her to meet your expectations. This can include being there to listen or helping to arrange a meeting with a counselor. If the individual chooses to say/do nothing let him/her know the door is open in the future to discuss the issue again, or, what will be your next step in resolving this issue.

Six Step Model developed in 1991 from various sources by my co-worker, Harriet Marritz, Counselor, Gettysburg College.

THE SALES EMPLOYEE AND THE BOSS

I was working in the sport industry where I supervised entry-level employees. One woman in sales was very good at what she did but seemed to have health issues that caused her to come in late for work and have low energy. I had some suspicions of an alcohol problem (smells mostly and talk about parties) but wasn't sure. When it began to mean that her work sometimes fell on others, they complained and told me more details about her activities outside of work. Although I didn't know how serious her problem was and initially didn't know if I should become involved, it became clear to me that I had to talk to her. My motivation was not only for what was happening at work but I was concerned about her life.

Anonymous, Professional Sport Organization

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as **specific** and **concrete** as possible.

- Jean has been late to work three times this past month
- Jean did not have her part of the presentation ready for the sales meeting on 1/23.
- Jean's boyfriend (Ron works with Jean) broke up with her due to her drinking.
- Co-workers report Jean didn't remember the Saturday night conversation, about a trip to the city, when they were drinking together.

Step 1: I care... *Jean, I care about you and I'm concerned about you.*

Step 2: I see...

- *You were late to work three times this past month*
- *You did not have your part of the presentation ready for the sales meeting on 1/23.*
- *Ron said he broke up with you due to your drinking.*
- *Your co-workers said that you didn't remember the Saturday night conversation, about a trip to the city, they had with you when you were drinking together.*

Step 3: I feel...

- *I'm frustrated with your lateness to work, I'm angry that you didn't keep your promise to me and your co-workers to do your part of the presentation, I'm concerned about the effect your behavior is having on your reputation, I'm worried about your health.*

Step 4: Listen...

Step 5: I want... *I want you to come to work on time with your work completed; I want you to make an appointment with HR and talk to a counselor.*

Step 6: I will... *I will be here to listen, I will be checking that you are working with HR on this matter. I won't keep you as an employee if these things don't happen.*

PARENTS, COACH, PRINCIPAL & SCHOOL BOARD

We recently had a student athlete disciplined for drinking. She is a great kid from a caring family. She was suspended and told she could not participate in 20% of the games during the up coming season. The parents understood the consequences. However, a problem arose over the wording in the student handbook about which contests she would not be allowed to participate in. The handbook does not specify if she has to miss the first two games or the ninth and tenth games, etc. The parents are taking their argument to the school board and are attempting to determine which contests their daughter should miss. The parents are making this a big deal and it is taking a lot of my time.

Don, High School Softball Coach

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as **specific** and **concrete** as possible.

- Parents came to me to talk about the games their daughter would miss.
- When I showed them the handbook the parents didn't agree it had to be the first two games and then went to talk to the principal.
- When the principal also said it would be the first two games the parents went to talk to the School Board President who then put it on the agenda for a school board meeting.

Step 1: I care... *I care about your daughter. She is a great person and a valued athlete. I appreciate both of you. You've been so supportive of me and the team.*

Step 2: I see...

- *You came to me to talk about the games your daughter wouldn't be able to participate in.*
- *When I said it would be the first two games, you went to talk to the principal about the wording in the handbook.*
- *When the principal said it would be the first two games you went to talk to the School Board President and asked to talk to the School Board about this.*
- *Since we last met, I've been called in to talk to the Principal and Board President.*

Step 3: I feel... *I feel frustrated and angry.*

Step 4: Listen...

Step 5: I want... *I want you to respect my decision about your daughter sitting out the first two games. I want you to not go to the School Board about my decision.*

Step 6: I will... *I will continue to coach your daughter fairly and will play her according to her ability once her suspension is over.*

THE PRINCIPAL AND THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

A law in Maryland said that a defibrillator had to be placed in all public schools. A private company did the installation of these metal boxes on the walls. After this company installed the boxes many schools complained of the box's location. The company was told that it had to be accessible for PE activities as well as after school and weekend recreation activities, and had done what they'd been contracted to do. However, after many complaints the company sent out an email to all of the principals and Physical Education teachers generously stating that they would be willing to move the defibrillator box to a different location free of charge. Our department chairman received this email and was very anxious to have it moved to a safer location. Our metal box was at eye level of someone who would be in a wheel chair. At the time we had 2 wheel chair bound students. The box had sharp corners and had been placed directly around a corner. This was a potential hazard to both the wheel chair student as well as others who cut the corner too close. After requesting permission multiple times from the Principal to have the box moved to another location, she would not agree even though it was of no expense to the school. Finally one day she approached me wanting to see the location of the box. She stood there with her arms folded and after explaining the liability and negligence of the location of the box, I recommended that she feel the corner of the box to see how sharp it was. She refused to even touch the box to see the possible danger that may incur if someone were to run it to it, especially a wheel chair student at that level. It was frustrating to me and the rest of the department that she couldn't see the potential danger and showed no concern about the care of the students that were in her building. I did not respect her lack of flexibility or her vision in this situation. We communicated to her that our department often used this area as a teaching station in the winter so at any given time there could be 35 students executing physical activity in this location. She was stubborn and refused to have it moved. Still to this day, 5 years later and after many, many requests, the box remains in the same location.

Anonymous, Middle School Physical Education Teacher

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as specific and concrete as possible.

- Requests have been made on (list dates) to move the defibrillator box.
- When shown the location of the box by Anonymous and requested to feel the sharpness of the corner of the box, you refused.
- Requests to move the box have been denied on (list dates).

Step 1: I care... *I care about you as my principal.*

Step 2: I see...

- *On (list dates) I requested that the defibrillator box be moved.*
- *When I showed you the location of the box and requested that you feel the sharpness of the corner of the box, you refused.*
- *Requests I've made (list dates) to move the box have been denied.*

Step 3: I feel... *I feel frustrated, fearful and angry.*

Step 4: Listen...

Step 5: I want... *I want the box moved by 3/30 to _____ (list the location that is safe).*

Step 6: I will... *I will contact the appropriate agencies/individuals (Superintendent, ADA, PTA) who can facilitate getting the box moved if you chose not to have it moved.*

THE SLACKER AND THE FITNESS CENTER SUPERVISOR

I was coordinator of the Glenville State College fitness center. I had a concern regarding a student worker. When running the fitness center there were many hours that I was not in the fitness center while it was open. I was there from 6am-12pm most days but relied on my student workers to cover the remaining 9 hours. I became suspicious of one worker in regard to him showing up for work. After investigating several things I had to discuss with him his termination.

Bernie, Exercise Rehabilitation

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as specific and concrete as possible.

- On 1/10 and 1/17 at 1 PM workers came into the fitness center for their shifts and no one was there working. These were dates/times when Jim was scheduled to work.
- On those same dates, clients reported that no one was working while they worked out at these times.
- On those same dates/times when Jim was to work, he had not logged his hours onto the time sheet.
- On 1/19 at 1 PM when Jim was scheduled to work, I went to the fitness center and he wasn't there.

Step 1: I care... *I care about you.*

Step 2: I see...

- *On 1/10 and 1/17 at 1 PM workers came into the fitness center for their shifts and no one was working. These were dates/times when you were scheduled to work.*
- *On those same dates, clients reported that no one was working while they were using the facility.*
- *On those same dates/times when you were to work, you had not logged your hours onto the time sheet.*
- *On 1/19 at 1 PM when you were scheduled to work, I went to the fitness center and you weren't there.*

Step 3: I feel... *I feel disappointed and concerned about not having the facility and the money box staffed by you.*

Step 4: Listen...

Step 5: I want... *I want you to turn in your employee ID now.*

Step 6: I will... *I am terminating your employment effective immediately.*

THE COACH, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, SUPERVISORS & PARENTS

I had a coach who was great to work with and very good with the kids. He coached a high-profile sport and the team had not been very successful. I was pressured by my supervisors and many parents to fire the coach. Even though I believed he did a good job, I also believed that with no support from the rest of the administration or the parents, he could not be successful. I needed to have an end-of-season meeting with him to try and get him to realize it was time to resign.

Stephanie, High School Athletic Director

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as specific and concrete as possible.

- Win/loss record of the team is _____ over the past ___ years.
- Parents came to talk with me on _____ (list all dates) asking for his resignation.
- Principal and Superintendent met with me on _____ (list dates) advising me to replace him.

Step 1: I care... *I care about you and appreciate how ethical and good you are with your athletes.*

Step 2: I see...

- *The win/loss record of the team is _____ over the past ___ years.*
- *I had parents come to talk with me on _____ (list all dates) asking for me to fire you.*
- *My Principal and Superintendent met with me on _____ (list dates) advising me to replace you.*

Step 3: I feel... *I feel sad.*

Step 4: Listen...

Step 5: I want... *I want you to resign. I don't think you can be successful without the support from the rest of the administration and the parents.*

Step 6: I will...

- *I will accept your resignation and be supportive of you through my announcing not only your resignation but within that announcement speaking to the tremendous amount of good you have done with our athletes.*
- *As I said, I don't think you can be successful without the support from the rest of the administration and the parents so if you won't resign, I will fire you.*

**Using the MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT
RESOLUTION to script a concern you have...**

Write out a situation which is problematic:

List behaviors you have observed. Make your list as specific and concrete as possible.

-
-
-

Step 1: I care... (Use conversation format)

Step 2: I see... (Insert behaviors from your list above in a conversation format).

Step 3: I feel...(Use conversation format)

Step 4: Listen. (You cannot script this. Remember not to get sucked into responding or you will not be pursuing your agenda for this conversation. Just listen and jot down thoughts for future communication).

Step 5: I want... (Use conversation format)

Step 6: I will... (Use conversation format)

Model developed in 1991 from various sources by Harriet Marritz, Gettysburg College.