

KUBICA  LAFOREST  
CONSULTING

NEOTEC CONFERENCE 2012  
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Strategies for Managing  
Difficult Student Situations

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## Overview

- Understanding conflict and its role in crucial conversations
- Building your influence to guide dialogue and behavior
- Circumventing defensiveness, escalation, and avoidance to focus on persuasive interaction

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## Overview (continued)

- Tools, techniques, and methods to help you
- Considering coaching and mentoring

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## Group Guidelines—Rules of Engagement

- Cells on silent
- Check your egos at the door—its free
- Listen carefully—seek understanding first
- Participate fully—contribute your best
- 90/10 Rule = outcome focused vs. past/ problem focused

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## Group Guidelines (continued)

- Don't take each other or the facilitators too personally
- Healthy debate is critical for best outcomes, so be open and candid
- The facilitators reserve the right to interject and re-direct

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# Part I

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Common challenges

Understanding conflict and its  
role in crucial conversations

Building your influence

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## SPEED ROUND

Identifying Difficult Student Situations



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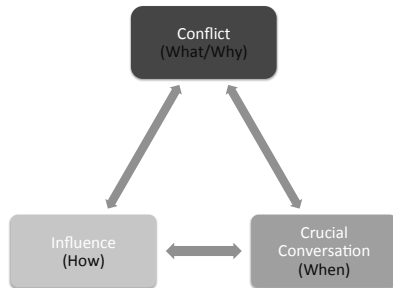
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### The interconnectivity between conflict, crucial conversations and influence




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### Common Theme

\* **Conflict:** Situations in which people have incompatible goals, interests, principles feelings and perceptions . . .

Conflict is stressful, and left unattended is often destructive to relationships and outcomes.

\* Definition adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership

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### Key Reasons and Types of Conflict

#### Reasons

1. Different objective
2. Different approach
3. Personality differences

#### Types

1. Internal (personal)
2. External
  - a. Interpersonal
  - b. Organizational

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“People who are most influential, who get things done are those who have mastered crucial conversations.”

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High  
Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler 2002

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## Interpersonal Skills:

A Key and Overlooked Area

- Relational
- Social
- Interaction skills
- Communication based

Considers the viewpoints of others, incorporates expectations of others, and works well with diverse groups of people.

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## What's Your Natural Reaction to Conflict?

- A. Always positive
- B. Positive
- C. Just another day
- D. Negative
- E. Always negative

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### The Paradigm of Healthy Conflict: Creative Tension

Healthy conflict leads to:

- Expanded ideas and perspectives
- Identification of more options
- Better decisions
- Experience of inclusion versus exclusion (value and contribution)
- Establishes credibility—yours

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### Conflict Resolution Alternatives

1. Resolve it! (a skill)  
Components
  - a. Influence the other's behavior
  - b. Influence/manage our own behavior
2. Ignore it or avoid it
3. Acquiesce and tolerate it

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### Two Goals for Conflict Management

1. Resolve with favorable results: win—win
2. Improve the relationship

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## A Crucial Conversation

A discussion between  
two or more people  
where opinions vary,  
stakes are high and  
emotions run strong . . .

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High  
Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler 2002


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## Ways People Handle Crucial Conversations

1. Avoid them
2. Face them and handle them poorly
3. Face them and handle them well

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High  
Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler 2002


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## Why Crucial Conversations Often Derail

- Natural fight or flight impulses and physical reaction (biology)
- They are often unexpected
- They can be confusing and stressful
- We tend to revert to “default style/behavior” when under pressure  
(Self-defeating behavior emerges under stress and trigger points)

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### Understanding Influence

- Influence is the ability to sway and guide other’s perspectives and behavior toward the results you seek.
- The difference between influence and manipulation?  
Good motive
- What’s key for the person you are trying to influence?  
Their sense you have their best interest in mind.

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### 7 Steps to Positively Influence Students

1. Clarify the objective/issue
2. Right time and place
3. Elicit their perspective
4. Focus on common ground
5. Mitigate disagreement/misalignment
6. Reaffirm and summarize agreement
7. Document and move to action

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The ideal is to build  
engagement and  
commitment versus  
force compliance.

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## Part II

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Circumventing defensiveness,  
escalation and avoidance to  
focus on persuasive interaction

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## Case Scenarios

### Self Defeating Roles and Stories

- |          |                                       |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Victim   | It's not my fault                     |
| Martyr   | I'm doing everything, sacrificing all |
| Villain  | It's all your fault                   |
| Helpless | There's nothing else I can do         |

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## Behaviors that Escalate & Prolong Conflict

Destructive responses emphasize:

- Negative expression of emotions
- Trying to win—at all costs (ego preservation)
- Lack of respect for the other person
- Avoiding conflict rather than addressing it

• Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership

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### 7 Constructive Responses to Minimize Conflict

1. Remember, some conflict is healthy and normal
2. Keep your approach factual not personal
  - a. Use observed behavior not assumptions
  - b. Emphasize task completion and problem-solving versus the problem or the person

Modified and adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership research

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### 7 Constructive Responses to Minimize Conflict

3. Use or model positive expression of emotion
4. Be clear on the essentials vs. the non-essentials
5. Focus on the exchange of ideas and creative solutions
6. Avoid provoking the other person
7. Don't enable it; either resolve it, ignore it, tolerate it or accept it if immaterial

Modified and adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership research

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### Model for Positively Expressing Emotions

- Situation – When and where?
- Behavior – What specifically happened?
- Impact – What was the consequence?
- Expectation – What needs to happen?
- Support – How can I help?

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## 5 Steps for Resolving Conflict

STEP 1: Define the Issue

STEP 2: Who's responsible?

STEP 3: Who's affected and perspective sharing

STEP 4: Identify musts: rules, standards

STEP 5: Find Common ground, alternatives,  
compromise

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## Summary for Resolving Conflict

- Handle your emotions first (self manage 1<sup>st</sup>)
  - Unhook your hot buttons—take time out
  - Apologize and make amends if you need to
- Listen, listen, listen
- Ask questions to better understand
- Search for common ground
- Help create solutions
- Agree on action—next step to help

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## Finding Common Ground and Mutual Purpose

*Out beyond the place of right-  
doing and wrong-doing, there  
is a field. I'll meet you there.*

-The mystical poet Rumi (1207-73)

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### Understanding the Communication Environment

It Involves both the sender's and receiver's:

- Culture
- Values
- Beliefs
- Educational background/  
experience

All contribute to each person's "point of view"

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### Understanding the Communication Environment

It Involves both the sender's and receiver's:

- Life experiences
- Communication capability
- Pressures (stressors)
- Goals/intent
- History of relationship

All contribute to each person's "point of view"

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What do you see?



Perceptions drive behavior

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### 3 Elements of Successful Conversations

1. Safety (emotional/physical)
2. Dialogue vs. monologue
3. Finding common ground or shared meaning

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### Dual Processing During Crucial Conversations

1. What? Awareness of content
2. Why? Understanding the conditions

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### Science of Building Teams: Leadership Tips

#### The Importance of Communication Pattern In Influencing Performance

- It's how, where, and who you say it to—not what you say
- Place heavy weight on proximity, location, face to face interactions, and social signs—less than words
- Use exploration and promote engagement

REFERENCE: Prof. Pentland- MIT & Sociometric Solutions

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## Science of Building Teams: Leadership Tips

### The Importance of Communication Pattern In Influencing Performance

- Show performance can be improved by shaping communication patterns
- Demonstrate communication exposure determines behavior  
(people learn mostly by examples—behavioral learning)

REFERENCE: Prof. Pentland- MIT & Sociometric Solutions

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## Non-linguistic Behavior – Social Display & Response

- “Activity” level and intonation
  - Intonation: fluctuating pace and amplitude
  - Speaking with a smile
  - Listening
  - Looking at others

Reference: Mark Buchanan , The Social Atom

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## Non-linguistic Behavior – Social Display & Response

“This ‘second channel’ of human communication acts in parallel with that based on rational thinking and verbal communication, and it is much more important in human affairs than most people like to think.”

Prof Pentland  
MIT & Sociometric Solutions

Reference: Mark Buchanan , The Social Atom

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### The Power of Nonverbal Communication

It includes body language, clothing and grooming, facial expressions, interpersonal space.

- Body language gives important clues about the unspoken meaning of a message
- Be aware of your own body language—does it support what you are saying and your intent?

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### The Power of Nonverbal Communication

It includes body language, clothing and grooming, facial expressions, interpersonal space.

- Observe and interpret other people's body language
- Beware of certain signals

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### Effective Self Monitoring & Regulation

It's critical for both teacher and student

- Awareness of your emotional state or charge
- Awareness of what you are doing and saying
- Adjusting your behavior (and language) as necessary to help vs. deteriorate the situation
- "Holding space" to explore the other's position, condition and perspective

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### Non-Defensive Communication Summary

- Stay out of the ineffective zone—self regulate
- Sincerely attempt to empathize
- Gently probe (inquire) and clarify
- Take ownership—offer help

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### Non-Defensive Communication Summary

- Disclose when appropriate
- Don't hold grudges—depersonalize
- Help students see in to their future by assessing and course correcting the present

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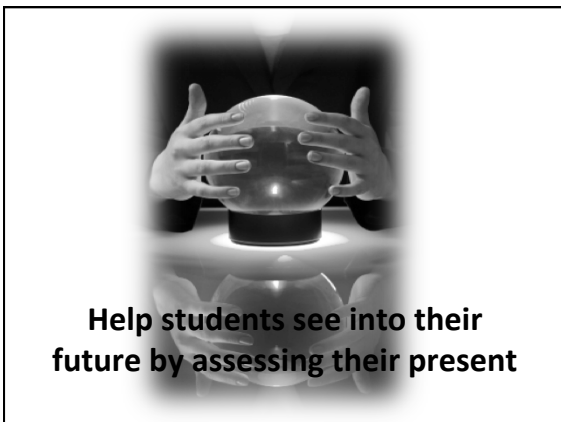
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# Part III

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## Tools, Techniques, and Methods to Help You

*Most students don't care what you know  
and say, unless they know that you care.*

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### 5 Supervisor Requisites to Build Student Accountability

1. Clarify Expectations
  - a. Does the student understand what is expected?
  - b. Is the gap between actual and desired performance clearly identified

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5 Supervisor Requisites to Build Student Accountability

2. Training

- a. Does the student have the knowledge and skills required to advance?

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5 Supervisor Requisites to Build Student Accountability

3. Address Barriers

- a. Is there anything preventing the student from performing properly?

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5 Supervisor Requisites to Build Student Accountability

4. Feedback and Coaching

- a. Does the student understand the results or poor performance

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#### 5 Supervisor Requisites to Build Student Accountability

##### 5. Consequences

- a. Does the student know how she is performing?
- b. Does the student have the self awareness and commitment to succeed?

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#### Taking Students From Dialogue to Action

1. What specific actions need to happen?
2. Who will do it?
3. By when?
4. How and when will we follow-up?

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#### Tips and Scripts

- "Will you please help me understand the situation from your perspective?"
- Mirror your understanding and perception check to confirm understanding and feelings.
- Option: Appropriate/relevant self-disclosure stories from your experience to serve as example.

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## Tips and Scripts

- Challenge thinking safely by, “Please allow me to respectfully challenge your thinking and play devils advocate, here.”
- ‘Prime’ when needed – “I think that X could be contributing here. Is that accurate for you?”

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### Questions to Prime Student Self Assessment

1. How do you think you are doing?
2. How do you see yourself getting along with others (name person/patient specifically if there is key concern with another)?
3. How do you see others (or \_\_\_\_ ) responding to you?

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### Questions to Prime Student Self Assessment

4. What do you believe that you contribute to the current situation?
5. What does \_\_\_\_ (other person) contribute to the problem? (or—What do you feel that I contribute to the problem?)
6. What do you want to see happen?

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### Questions to Prime Student Self Assessment

7. What are your ideas on what can help here and what you can do to make things better? (action plan)
8. What are you going to (willing to) do?
9. How can I help?
10. What can I do to help/assist you? (support and follow-up)

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### Metacognition



Thinking About One's Thinking  
Help students to be strategic learners

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### Metacognition

- Includes planning and goals setting, self-monitoring progress, self-evaluation and adapting as needed
- Capacity that leads to the self-awareness of one's personal control over thoughts, feelings and behavior

Reference: *Motivating Hard to Reach Students*  
Psychology in the Classroom: A Series on Applied Educational Psychology  
McCombs & Page, APA (Lovett, 2008; Weinstein et al., 2009)

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## Metacognition (continued)

- Consciously managing one's own motivation and attitudes toward learning
- Making adjustments to one's learning strategies when appropriate

Reference: Motivating Hard to Reach Students  
Psychology in the Classroom: A Series on Applied Educational Psychology  
McCombs & Pope, APA (Lovett, 2008; Weinstein et al., 2000)

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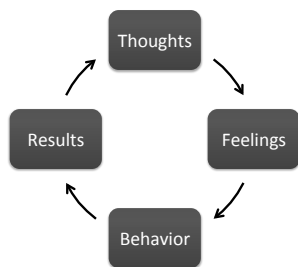
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## Metacognition

Teaching Students to Manage their Thought Cycle




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## Considering Coaching & Mentoring




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### Supervising vs. Coaching vs. Mentoring What's the Difference?



**Supervisor**

Has direct authority to give instructions to subordinates and is held responsible for the work and actions of others (employees or students)

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### Supervising vs. Coaching vs. Mentoring What's the Difference?



**Coach**

Uses a one-on-one developmental process focused on skill building; facilitates increased self-awareness and learning focused on the role, job or career outcomes.

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### Supervising vs. Coaching vs. Mentoring What's the Difference?



**Mentor**

Holds a personal relationship based on support, guidance and technical assistance—a trusted advisor or guide

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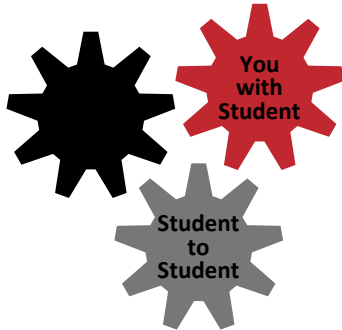
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Integrating the Coaching and Mentoring  
Approach to Enhance Student Learning



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# QUESTIONS?

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*Helping Today to Build a Better Success for Tomorrow*

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## Supplemental Materials

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**Key Skill Communication: Listening**

- Stop what you are doing and focus on the person
- Acknowledge the other (eye contact) the speaker
- Keep an open mind
- Don't dominate—balance talking; limit interruption

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**Key Skill Communication: Listening**

- Allow silence
- Ask questions to better understand
- Listen for facts
- Perception check your understanding

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**Key Communication Skill: Perception Checking**

Describing what you perceive and understand the other person feels without evaluating him/her.

- I get the impression you would rather not talk about this. Is this correct?
- Were you disappointed that they didn't include you?
- You look as if you felt hurt by my comment. Did you?

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### Body Language Signals to Avoid

- Finger or pencil tapping, which can indicate impatience
- Arms crossed over the chest, which makes you appear defensive or unsure
- Poor eye contact, which signals insecurity
- Clenched fist, which indicates hostility

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### Body Language Signals to Avoid

- Shifting position frequently or leg jiggling, which can indicate nervousness or impatience
- Slumped shoulders, which signals defeat or disinterest
- Constant finger-pointing, which can appear dictatorial

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### Rapport Building Tips

- Be aware of your personal energy and how you perceive the students' energy, mood, and affect for best timing for difficult conversations
- Remember to choose time and place
- Smile—engage
- Soft eye contact—connect

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### Rapport Building Tips

- Be grounded—breathe to relax and focus
- Mirror their language style and body language
- Use the persons name
- Be courteous—always use “please” and “thank you.”

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### Rapport Building Tips

- Show your interest and stay in the present
- Be empathetic
- Explain your reasons for saying no
- Use positive reinforcement
- Reframe issues as opportunities
- Facilitate commitment
- Clarify agreements

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### Communicating Bad News

- Act quickly
- Take a personal approach
- Be forthright
- Share the reasons
- Put the news in perspective in terms of moving forward—what’s next.

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### The Art of Constructive Criticism

- Do it in private
- Start with something positive or neutral
- Criticize the work or behavior, not the person

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### The Art of Constructive Criticism

- Identify what needs to change and how
- Be clear about your expectations and standards
- End on a positive and affirmative note

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### The Art of Constructive Criticism

**Describe**

**Explain**

**State expectation**

**Offer help**

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### Tips for Getting Your Message Across

- Plan and organize your thoughts into a logical sequence before you speak
- State your purpose or expectation
- Keep it simple and focused

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### Tips for Getting Your Message Across

- Demonstrate courtesy and respect
- Be specific
- Demonstrate when appropriate
- Confirm agreements

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