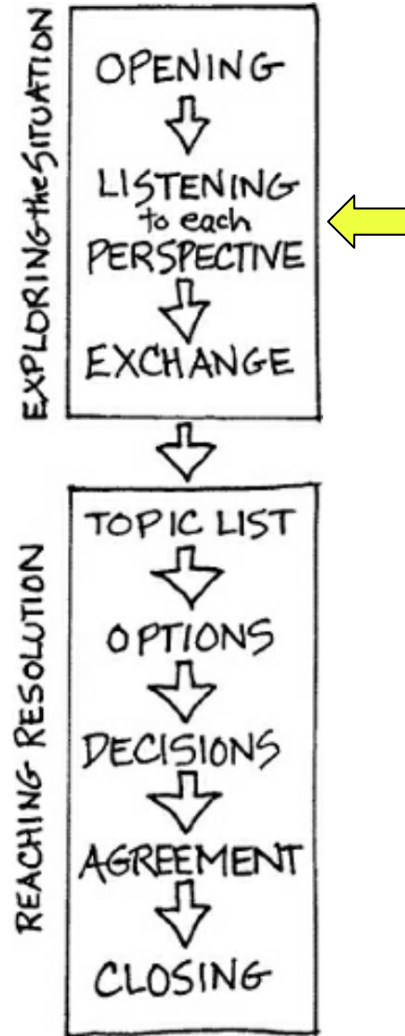


Listening to Each Perspective



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The Purpose: A chance to speak and to listen

Listening to Each Perspective gives each participant a chance to relate their experience, describe their concerns, make their claims, and express their feelings—without interruption or challenge.

It also gives mediators a feel for the speaker's state of mind, how they think, and what they think is important and why.

Consider whether to set a ballpark time limit for each person at least for the first segment of clients sharing information, and, if so, let them know (see the next section about explaining taking turns).

Listening to Each Perspective

- 1. Explain how taking turns sharing information works**
- 2. Ask an open-ended starting question**
- 3. Steer minimally if at all**
- 4. Protect each person's speaking time**
- 5. Check, thank, move on to the other person**

Listening to Each Perspective

1. Explain how taking turns sharing information works

Each of you will have a turn to speak about the situation.

Save any responses, comments, or questions for later. Write down anything you want to remember to say.

Try to notice anything the speaker says that's new to you.

You may hear things that surprise you, or that you strongly disagree with. We should all be trying to understand how each person sees the situation, and to learn about the differences in what you each think and know

If you would each hold your questions and responses for later—that way each of you will get a turn without being interrupted.

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2. Ask an open-ended starting question

It's OK to just start with the Petitioner (Say "we usually just start with the Petitioner.")

Example starting question ideas:

"What topics do you think we need to be talking about today and what information do you have to share to help us understand things?"

"Please tell us about the situation from your point of view."

(Ask your opening question in a tone that shows professionalism/respect and that you care about hearing their answer. You are a role model here.)

Listening to Each Perspective

3. Steer minimally if at all

When mediators listen quietly, it helps create a receptive mood and respects how each person chooses to relate their experience.

Save your questions for later, unless you don't understand what they're saying, or they've been overly brief or vague.

Resist the impulse to reflect back or summarize. You will do a lot of that later, but for now let their own words stand, without implying that you are judging, improving, or translating what they have to say.

Listening to Each Perspective

3. Steer minimally if at all (What if the speaker gets off track)

There are some situations where the mediator does say something: You need information to follow their account. (Who is Richard?)

Repeating. Step in to summarize and ask if they have covered the main things they wanted to bring up. Then inquire, Would it make sense for Tina to take a turn now?

Endless details. Some people expect to tell their story ALL the way from the beginning. They may not know how to outline their main points, or to leave out some details—even when asked to. Consider using a series of shorter go-rounds, each with a more limited question: What happened last week? What upsets you most?

Not saying much. Give a few prompts—Is there anything else you want to mention now? Could you say a bit about what the impact has been? Don't press—there will be time to find out more during the Exchange.

Listening to Each Perspective

4. Protect each person's speaking time (interruptions)

Quietly ask them to hold back during the other person's turn, and to write themselves a note about what they want to say.

Use a warm, respectful tone. Acknowledge that it can be hard to listen.

Suggest that the speaker tell YOU instead of talking directly to the other party. (It's nearly impossible for listeners not to respond to finger-pointing accusations or direct questions, e.g., "Why did you slash our tires?")

Consider a break. Sometimes people just need a minute to cool off and reflect.

Cope. If one participant seems incapable of staying quiet, don't stress about it. Keep your attention on the current speaker. Sometimes it works to ignore the interrupter and focus on modeling good listening skills.

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5. Check, thank, move on to the other person

Move into the Exchange. If all parties are eagerly engaged in useful discussion, go with their momentum. When there's a lull in the conversation, you can say, **Before we continue, not everyone got a full turn back there. Does anyone want to bring up something that hasn't been mentioned yet?**

Check in: If the first person seems to be done (and the second person hasn't had their turn yet), ask **"Is there anything else you want to bring up at this point?"** Thank them for sharing. You might need to give each person more than one chance to share information or clarify based on what the other person brought up (it can go back and forth a few times).

Repeat your opening question for the next person. If they start by responding specifically to something that's been said, you may want to stop them gently and encourage them to start off by explaining their view of the situation first, rather than by responding to what the other person said.

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Questions?