

# Respectful Curiosity

## *The Art of Engagement*

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# Attitude is the Father of the Action

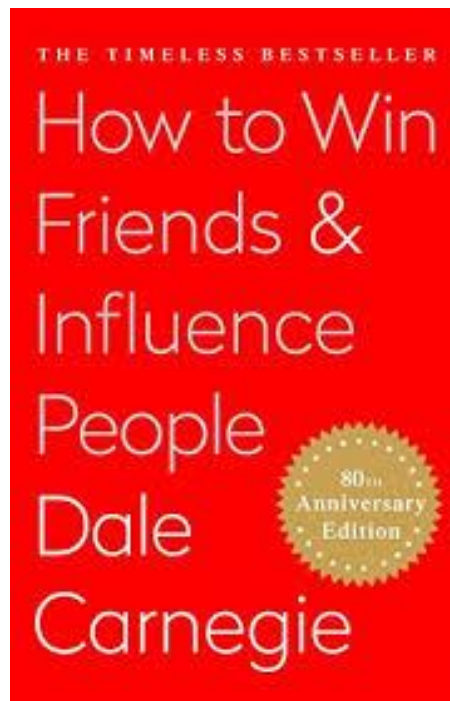
*“Success as a therapist is not found in doing something for the client, but rather in being someone for the client.”*

- Ili Rivera Walter

# Who are you going to BE?

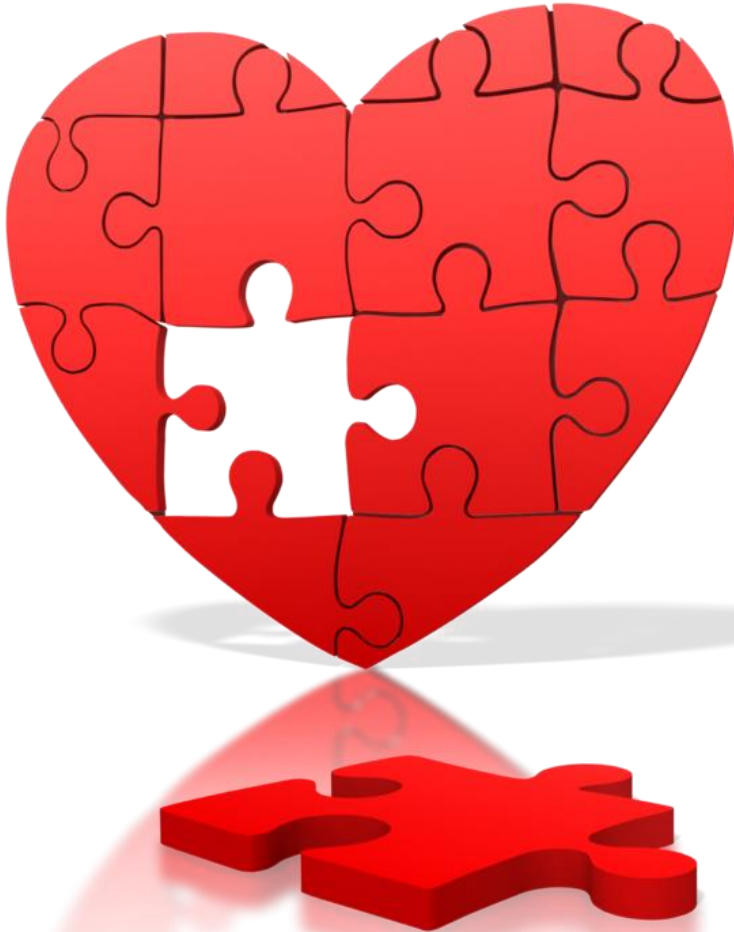
*“When you meet people, show real appreciation, then genuine curiosity.”*

– Martha Beck



# Respectful Curiosity:

## *The “Heart” of Engagement*





# What we're covering today

- Roadblocks to engagement
- Respectful curiosity as a guiding attitude and skill in the engagement process
- Intentional and deliberate curiosity questions
- Responding to disengagement
- Bigger picture



*Roadblocks to Effective  
Engagement*

# Why Can't We Connect?



# What gets in the way?

## *Issues and Roadblocks*



# The “Lenses” We Look Through

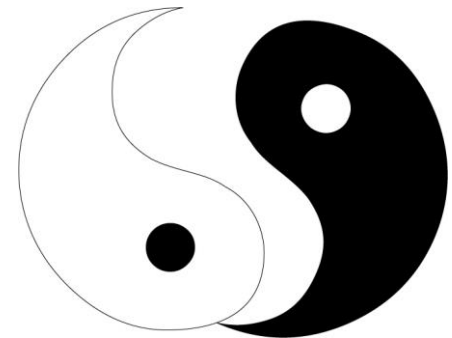
## *Assumptions, Biases, Projections*





# Negative Emphasis/Deficit-Based

- **Problem-focused historically.** “People need to be fixed.”
  - *Isn't that our job?*
- **The Fixer**
  - Solution focus as a rationalization
    - *We all want to be right*
    - *Manager vs. Coach/Leader*
    - *Prevents interpersonal harmony*



# Strengths-Based vs Deficit-Based

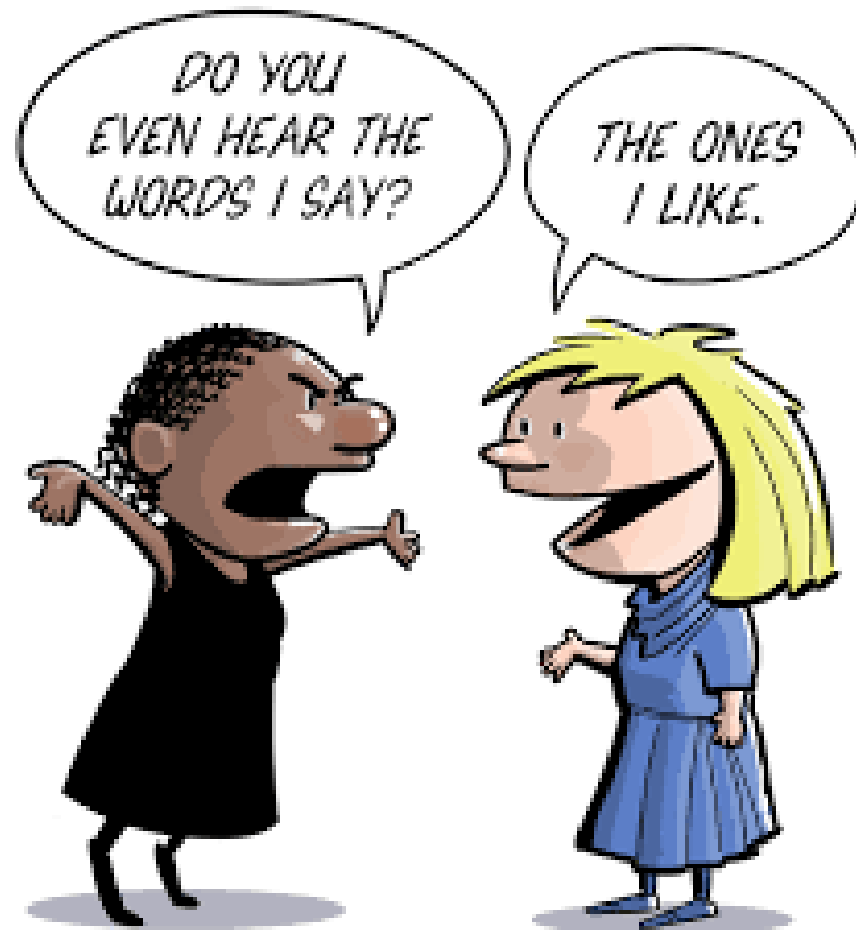
## Strengths-Based Concepts

- Engage
- Persistent
- Celebrate (successes)
- Empower
- Process-focused
- Dynamic
- Unique
- People's context is primary

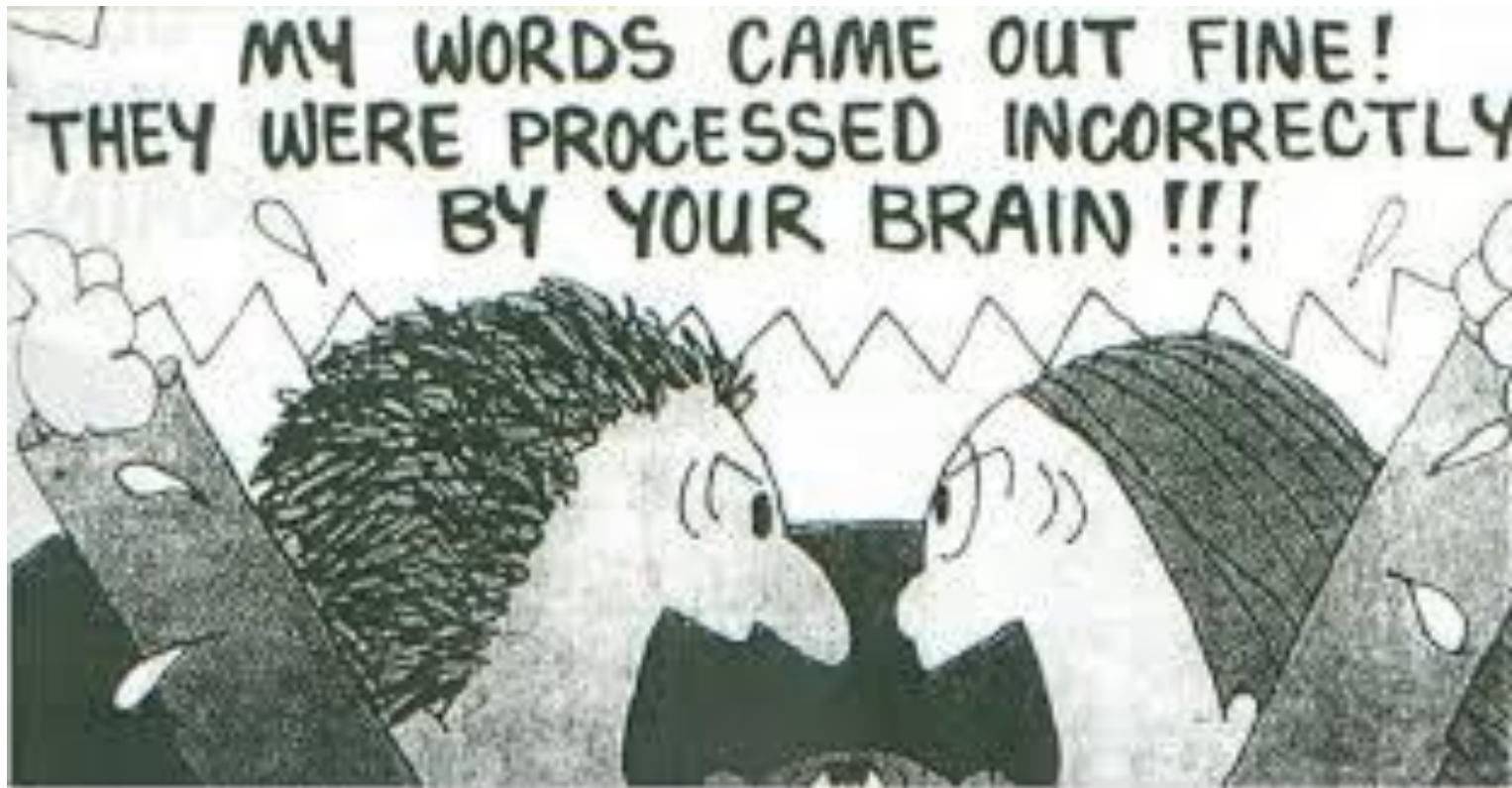
## Deficit-Based Concepts

- Intervene
- Resistant
- Punish (non-compliance)
- Control
- Behavior-focused
- Static
- Deviant
- Professional's context is primary

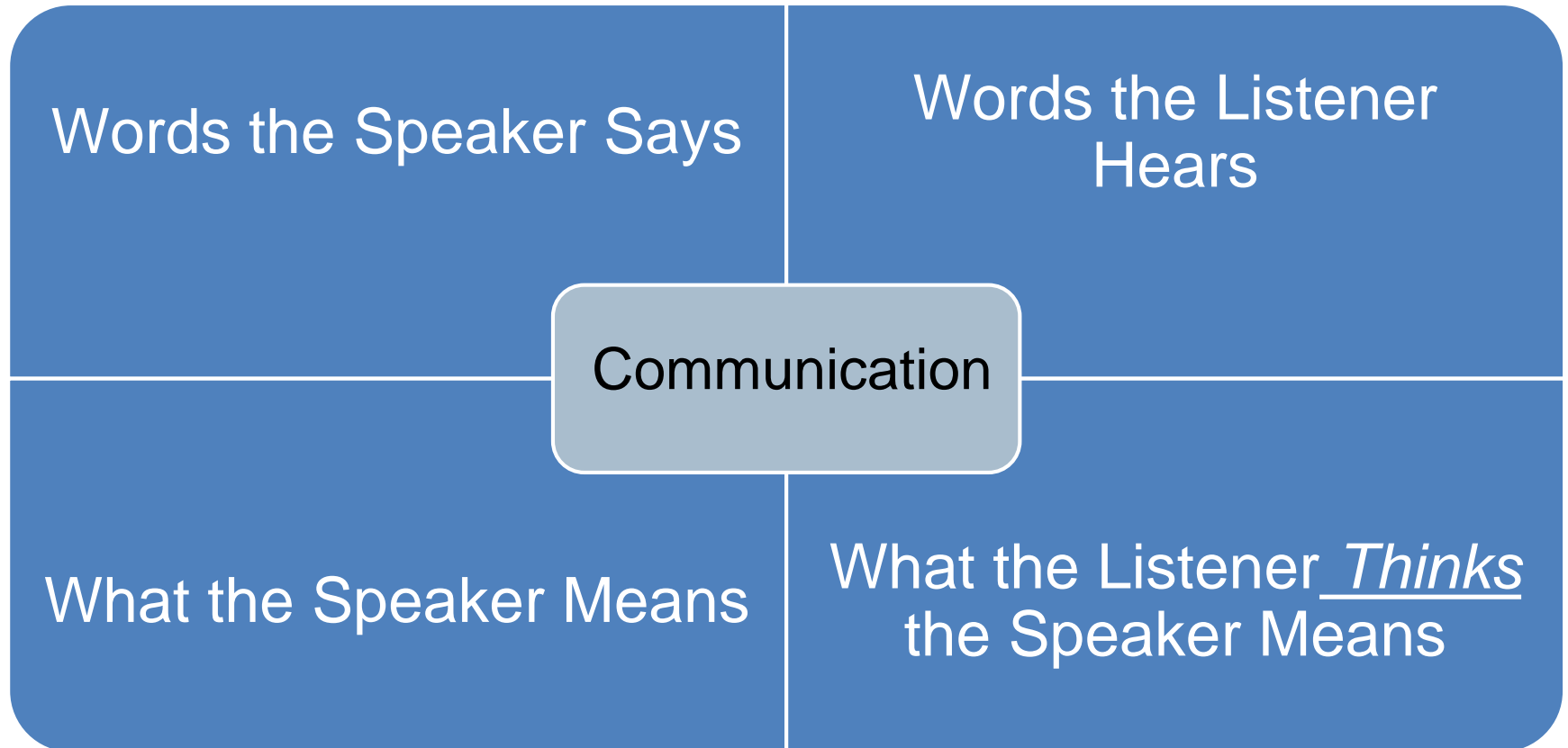
It's not what you say, it's how you say it...  
*or don't.*



# Where Communication Can Go Wrong



# Where communication can go wrong





# Final result?

## Increased Stress



*Another way...*

# Respectful Curiosity and the Engagement Process

*Curiosity killed the cat, but where human  
beings are concerned, the only thing a  
healthy curiosity can kill is ignorance.*

- Harry Lorayne



## CSWE Core Competency #2

### Engage *Diversity and Difference in Practice*

#### Social Workers:

- apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- present themselves as learners and **engage** clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

## CSWE Core Competency #6

### *Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities*

#### **Social Workers:**

- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to **engage** with clients and constituencies; and
- use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively **engage** diverse clients and constituencies.

# Engagement: *The First Process*

- The process of establishing a mutually trusting and respectful relationship.



# The Importance of Engagement (*and how to do it...*)

***This is a strengths-based exploratory process,  
so...first, be Intentional and Deliberate!***

- Stance of informed, respectful curiosity
- Ask different questions
- Ask questions differently



**S-BEP**



# Engagement: *Before First Meeting*

- Engagement starts before you meet your client
- Attitude, philosophy, frame of reference
- Your goals (4 principles)

# 4 Principles: *RULE*

- Resist
- Uncover and Understand
- Listen carefully, with empathy
- Empower/Encourage hope and optimism

# Engagement: *Setting the Tone*

- Goals of the first few minutes
- Example: Find the “respectful curiosity”

# Engagement: *Setting an Agenda*

- Whose agenda is it?
- Can you be explicit in your client's priorities by being respectfully curious?
  - “What brings you in today?”
  - “What’s on your mind?”
  - “What would you like to talk about today?”
  - “How can I help you?”
  - “How would you like to begin?”



# Respectful Curiosity: *Stories and Challenges*

**Ask questions that invite people to share their stories *and* enable them to clarify the challenges:**

- *What's happening? How do you feel about this? How long has this been a concern for you? How is it affecting you and others...? Help me to understand...What has worked? What hasn't worked...?*

# Respectful Curiosity: *Picture of the Future*

**Ask questions that help people explore their aspirations, dreams, interests and goals:**

- *What do you want to be happening instead? What will it look like when this challenge is addressed...”*
- *The “Miracle Question”*



# Respectful Curiosity: *Strengths and Exceptions*

**Ask questions that help people explore their strengths and the exceptions to the challenge:**

- *What strengths/resources do you have that might be helpful to you? What do you do well?*
- *What is happening when the challenge is not present?*

# Respectful Curiosity:

## *Other Resources*

**Ask questions that help the person identify resources that might help them reach their goals:**

- *Who else might be able to help? What other skills and resources might be helpful?*

# Respectful Curiosity: *Plans and Next Steps*

**Ask questions that enable people to specify concrete steps toward their goals:**

- *What steps can be taken given your picture of the future, strengths and resources? Who will do what? How? By When?*





# Engagement: *Traps to Avoid*

- The “righting reflex”
- Asking too many questions
- “Counselor advocacy responses”
- Roadblocks to effective listening

# Recognizing Disengagement and Discord

- Signals and Signs to watch for in our clients
- How do we respond?

# Anyone thinking...?

- “I do this already.”
- “I can’t do this...it’s “soft” and I need to be tough on these people.”
- “This approach lets people “off the hook” and removes responsibility.”
- “They’re just flat wrong...too much is riding on this decision. I have to win.”

*A need for strengths  
and hope*

Now, more than  
ever, why this  
matters...



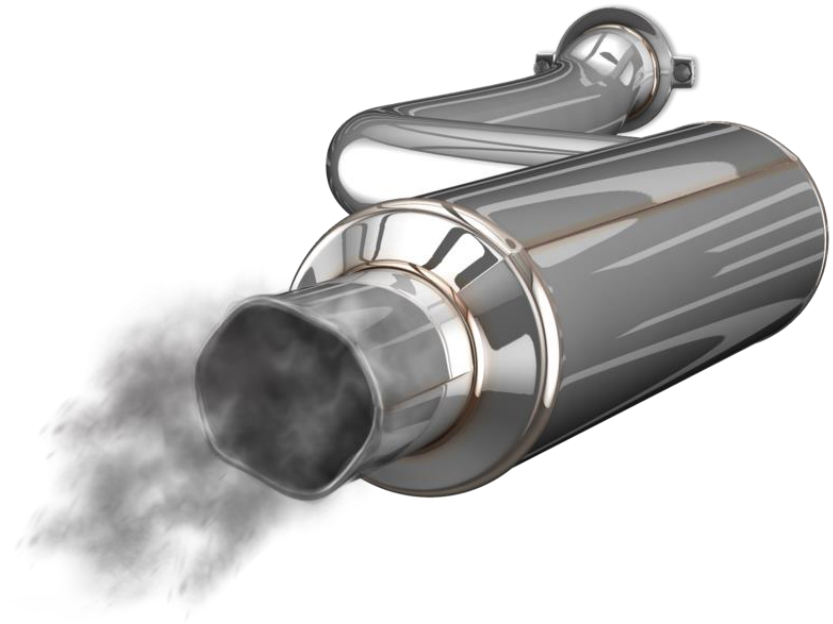
# Civility Lost





# TIC and Cultural Humility:

*What lens are you looking through?*





# Is it possible to know everything?

*“To be culturally competent doesn’t mean you are an authority in the values and beliefs of every culture. What it means is that you hold a deep respect for cultural differences and are eager to learn, and willing to accept, that there are many ways of viewing the world.”*

- Okokon O. Udo

# Hope

“Hope IS BEING  
ABLE TO SEE THAT THERE  
IS light DESPITE  
ALL OF THE DARKNESS.”

Desmond Tutu

[www.ChristinDitchfield.com](http://www.ChristinDitchfield.com)



**Where there is no vision,  
there is no hope.**

George Washington Carver

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