

# GOOD MEETING MANAGEMENT...



Special Education Resolution Center  
Oklahoma State University

# Why Good Meeting Management (GMM) Matters

- Special Education is really just about the kids!
  - Keep the focus there!
- GMM lessons conflict!
- GMM facilitates positive parent involvement!
- GMM reduces stress and diversion of resources!
- Outcomes are better for students when schools and parents work effectively together!



# What is Good Meeting Management?

- Handling difficult emotions.
  - Parents
  - School personnel
- Meeting preparation.
- Meeting strategies that foster positive participation.
- Using good communication skills that will help facilitate a positive Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.
- Focusing on shared interests in the student.
- Building Relationships.



# People Behaving Badly

What is it all about?

- Lack of respect
- Feeling disregarded
- Feeling powerless
- Feeling controlled
- Fear, grief, and loss
- Questioning ability
- Questioning commitment
- Question professionalism
- Feeling unprepared
- Unsure how to handle a difficult situation.



# Managing Difficult Emotion

## Manage Yourself and the Situation



- Remain Calm
  - Watch your own tone of voice and nonverbal behavior.
- Acknowledge the emotion
  - “I can see that you are angry.” Show respect for the fact that this is a difficult situation for this person.
- Ask WHY? (what or how)
  - “Help me understand your concerns. Why do you think that would help John?”
  - “I can see that we view this issue differently. I need to give your view some more thought. Can we meet again?”
- Reframe the issue
  - “You feel strongly that John needs day- to- day assistance with assignments so that he can experience success.”



# Educators

Do Not add fuel to the fire!

- Avoid troublesome statements like:
  - The district can not afford that.
  - We do not do that here.
  - We can not find anyone to do that.
  - Our superintendent would never approve that!
  - This is our program for students with that disability.
  - We are not prepared to discuss that.
  - He needs an FBA for a BIP in his IEP!



# Educators



## Do not add fuel to the fire!

- Do not cut off discussion of positional demands made by the parent.
- Refocus the discussion on the interests that both parties have in the child.
- Keep the discussion open with good communication skills.
- Explore the interest that the parent has behind any positional demand.
- When a parent shares a concern or interest, assist the parent in generating options that utilize the strengths of your programming.





# Parents...

## Equal team members!

- ⦿ Remember that parents have the equal value of any team member.
- ⦿ Take some time to think about your specific concerns.
- ⦿ Do not be afraid to ask what abbreviations stand for – BIP, FBA, IEP.
- ⦿ Take your concerns and interests to the team to discuss and find solutions.
- ⦿ The school team knows best what strengths and resources they have to serve your child. Ask what they are!
- ⦿ Do not blame or attack “the school” for a problem that your child is having.
- ⦿ Remember that it is you and the team against the problem. It is not you against the team.

# Meeting Preparation

- ⦿ Get parents involved early in the IEP process.
  - Develop a rapport and relationship early in the year.
- ⦿ Make a personal call to invite and encourage parents to attend.
- ⦿ Send a written notice of meeting. With notice, send an agenda and questions for the parent to consider so that they are prepared to engage in discussions.
- ⦿ Send forms to the teachers so that each teacher will have input on the current performance of the child.
- ⦿ Send a form to the child so that the child can have input!
- ⦿ Send a copy of the draft IEP or any evaluations that might have been conducted prior to the meeting.



# IEP Meeting Strategies

## Active Listening

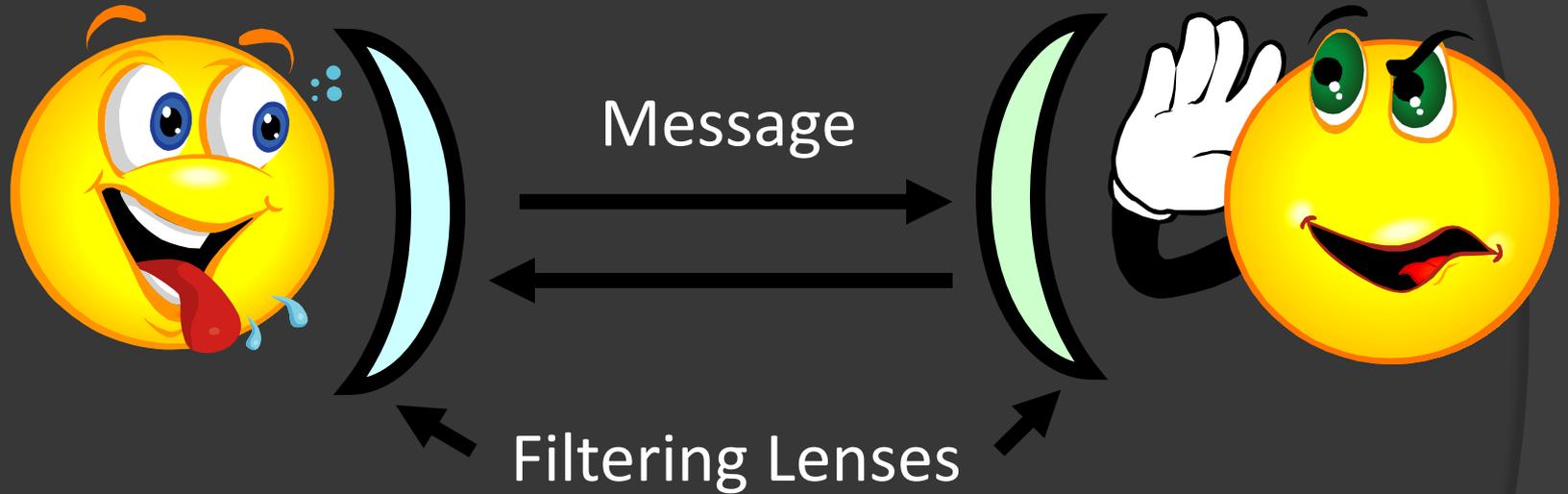


- Use Active Listening
  - Active listening helps people to feel understood and is a useful way to prevent misunderstandings.
  - Active listening is a proactive way to manage emotional situations.
  - Active listening conveys respect to the speaker.
- Active listeners come away with an understanding of both facts and feelings that the speaker expressed.
  - Fact: Who, what, when, where, and why?
  - Feeling : Verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion.

# Communication Loop

Sender

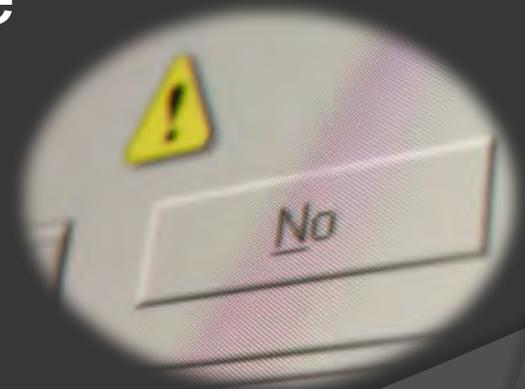
Receiver



Reflective or  
Active Listening

# Guidelines for Active Listeners

- Empathize – listen with the heart.
- Limit distractions at the meeting.
- Use appropriate nonverbal behavior.
- Do not say NO! Ask for more information!



# Steps to Active Listening

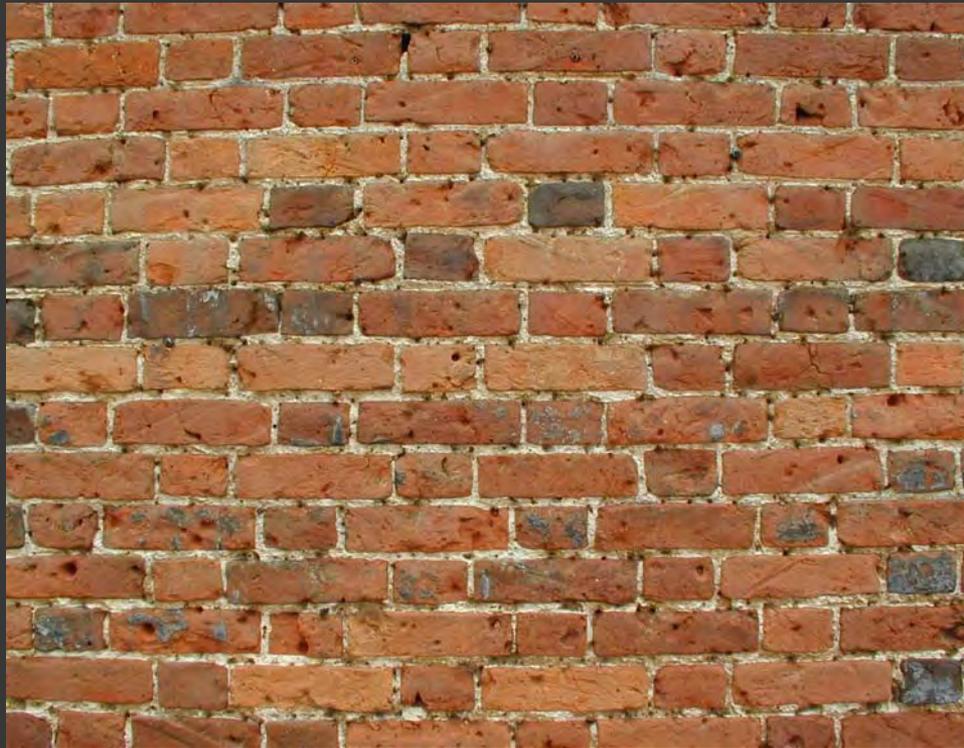
Steps	Purpose	Example
<b>Convey interest</b>	Show you are listening	I see... Tell me more about...
<b>Restate and reframe</b>	Identify Facts and Feelings - Manage emotions	You are frustrated by... That situation has left you feeling...
<b>Clarify</b>	Check for accuracy in your understanding	I'm not sure I understand... Did I understand that right?
<b>Summarize</b>	Accurately capture the main idea	Your concern is ...

# Listening is a disciplined skill

- You can not do two things at once if one of them is listening.
- You can not listen if you are trying to figure out what to say.
- You can not listen if you are assuming.



# What stands in the way?



# What can we do?



# Finding the Interests

- What need is the person taking this position attempting to satisfy?
- What is motivating the person?
- What is the person trying to accomplish?
- What is the person afraid will happen if a demand is not fulfilled?



# Finding the Interests



Question, question, question. . .

- Why is that solution so important for you?
- Why are you suggesting. . . ?
- What would you accomplish in getting what you want?
- What if that did/didn't happen?
- How will you be affected by. . .
- Imagine that you got \_\_\_\_\_; what would be taken care of?



- ⦿ The aim is not to change the other person, but to change the way we communicate.
- ⦿ The goal is to explore and find common interests in the child.
- ⦿ The discovery of common interests moves the conversation from “your position against mine” to “you and I against the problem.”
- ⦿ The goal is to find common ground so that a mutually acceptable solution can be found.
- ⦿ The goal is to build relationships and work together.

# Building Relationships!

- Mutual Respect + Trust = Quality Partnership!
  - Does not happen automatically!
  - Must be the choice of both parties!
- To begin:
  - Let go of negative attitudes.
  - Eliminate the need for power.
  - Keep working at it!
- Neither the parent or the school can do what the child needs alone! They need each other!



# Meeting Strategies

## Foster Positive Participation



- Use active listening.
- Provide flexibility in scheduling.
- Communicate and preplan at the school level so that personnel are prepared to fully participate.
- Be sure in advance that all participants have the same time expectations.
- Preconference with those not attending the meeting.
- Maintain a focus on the shared interests for the child. Agree to put the child first.
- Try and provide an agenda to offer clear structure.
- Model professionalism, focus, and efficient use of time.

- ⦿ Discuss the child in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Do not bombard the parent with negatives.
- ⦿ Focus on what can be done to assist the child improve rather than focus on limitations and shortcomings.
- ⦿ Strengthen staff skills for intervening when upset occurs.
- ⦿ Contact the parent from time to time to share good information about the child's performance.
- ⦿ Clarify if anyone must leave early and get input before that person leaves.
- ⦿ Support the parents feeling: ask questions, show respect, interest, and concern. Try to understand their point of view.



# In Summary

- ⦿ Build rapport before the meeting by using friendly letters, phone calls, and other communications.
- ⦿ Prepare parents in advance.
  - Exchange evaluations.
  - Provide draft IEP upon request.
- ⦿ Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- ⦿ Have the right people at the table.
- ⦿ Schedule sufficient time.
- ⦿ Make introductions.
- ⦿ Use an agenda
  - Review the agenda.
  - Refer back to the agenda to keep participants on track.
- ⦿ Remember! This is a collaborative problem solving opportunity.



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