

COMMUNICATING WITH TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY

"A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity." -Dalai Lama

SETTING THE CONTEXT

In this module, you will examine how communicating with transparency and integrity is an impetus for creating more trust within your team, and trust for you as a leader. Particularly during this time of imminent change within our Division and on campus, it is especially critical that managers find ways to authentically be transparent and hold that space for their staff.

3 CULTURE TIPS: Here are actions that you can do, starting today!

1. During times of uncertainty (you are more than likely feeling this now), have a conversation with your staff of how you are feeling regarding the unknown. This shows your vulnerability as a leader, and also exemplifies that you empathize with some of the fears they may also have.
2. Share news of what you know, when you know it, even when you may not have all of the answers. Be clear with your colleagues what you can and can't share and why.
3. Clarify that information can change, and when it does, update them as soon as you know it. .

HOW

Transparent communication is a skill, a mindset, a point of view. Following are several situations in which open, honest communication is vital to a healthy workplace.

About Change: Open communication regarding possible changes on the horizon is vital to building trust. Don't wait until you have all the details. At the same time, do as much as you can to get the latest information. Ask your manager for updates frequently.

When Asked for Feedback: Tell others honestly and objectively. People would rather have the truth than a made up answer that doesn't tell them what they really want to know.

When someone asks you a question, the answer to which may be confidential: Even if you are not sure if the information is confidential, tell him/her that this may be confidential. As a manager, be very careful about protecting sensitive information. If you are not sure, ask your HR representative.

When someone asks you a personal question: For example, for advice about what he/she should do in a certain situation or what *you* would do. First, if it's about something in their personal life, refer them to Tang's free, confidential counseling services. If they are having problems with someone on their team, talk about it. Listen empathetically and with compassion. Together, think of ways the problem may be addressed. If it's complicated or personal, refer the employee to campus counseling services.

When there is conflict among staff members: Don't take sides. Listen openly to both parties. Find a private space where you can hold a meeting. Avoid escalation of emotions by remaining calm and neutral. Set ground rules. For example, no 'talking over' one another. The goal is to leave with a mutually agreed upon plan to resolve the conflict. Give the speaker something (a paperweight, something from your desk) to hold when it is his/her time to speak. During this time, others may only listen. After a speaker is finished, paraphrase what you think you heard and ask if your perception is correct. This is where transparency will be very important. Pass the object to the other person. Repeat this process. Ask one at a time, what will *you* do to resolve this conflict? Write down purposed changes in behavior. If you cannot reach a resolution or emotions run too high for a productive discussion, make an appointment with a CARE Services.

WHY

Communicating transparently is intentional. **People who communicate *honestly, openly, and authentically* are more credible, more often heard, and considered more trustworthy.** Studies show that many great leaders are open communicators and very good listeners. Their messages are clear, straightforward, and consistent.

Transparent communication is essential to managing and leading others successfully. Clear, honest communication builds trust. Without trust, relationships can't grow.

WHAT

Communication is a broad concept. It includes speaking, writing, active listening (an often overlooked communication skill)—basically any behavior that conveys your thoughts and feelings. Even when people do not share the same language, they find ways to communicate (hands, pictures, facial expressions). Studies show that managers who are strategic thinkers possess *all* of the communication skills. They *read* widely and often. They *talk* to people and ask their opinions. When they *speak*, they *ask questions* and *challenge assumptions*. They *listen* carefully whenever they have the opportunity to learn from others. Honest, transparent communication with staff and coworkers *builds trust and credibility*.

Transparent communication, while it may seem like an easy thing to do, can be difficult. The fact is, we tend to shy away from the truth when it is not favorable or makes us look bad. If trust has not been established (it takes time), being transparent is even more difficult. People may already think of you as someone who says one thing and does another.