LEAPS

The LEAPS model is a structured approach to communication in any situation. In a conflict context, LEAPS may help you to establish some control and defuse potential conflict situations. For example, when a complaint is expressed, it is key to move away from the problem to the problem-solving stage. This initially is not always possible because of people’s emotional states triggered by the upset. However, the LEAPS Communication Model helps you to move to the problem-solving stage by following five steps:

**Listen**

The first step of the LEAPS Communication Model is just to Listen. Listening is a fundamental skill to understanding a problem and responding in an effective and appropriate way. Listening will enable you to understand the content of what is being said as well as the emotional level, which will inform you on how to respond and reach the problem-solving stage. If a person is angry, just listening allows the person to work through the emotional reaction and let all their feelings out. Once this is done they can then move on and think about solving the problem. It can be hard not to take it personally when someone is shouting their problems at you, but you must try and stay calm.

**Empathise**

Empathising is the second step of the model. Empathising with the person will show that you are listening and understand what they are saying. Empathy allows you to see the problem from the other person's view, which will then help you to understand. The key is to be interested and try not to pre-judge people just because you would do it differently. Instead, try to see it through their eyes.

**Ask**

To get to the heart of the problem you must ask questions. At this part of the LEAPS model you need to ask: Who? What? Where? When? How? This will show you are concerned and want to help solve the problem. Asking questions will also help you to identify if the person is ready for your help and potentially reduce the emotion of the situation. These open questions require thought which can only be achieved with a clear mind. Therefore, if their emotions are still high, they will not have the clear head that is necessary to come up with a solution. If this is the case, you might have to listen to them more until their emotions reduce.
Paraphrase

Put the facts, as you see them, in your own words. This will highlight any misunderstandings, as well as:

- Interesting the person and making them listen
- Allows you to take control
- Allows the person to modify their original statement
- Clarify the situation to the witness
- Prevent people from putting inaccurate words into your mouth

Summarise

The final part to LEAPS is to summarise. Consider the facts, be brief and decisive before you decide the next steps. This is a vital element in resolving conflict and the negotiation process. You must understand what the person feels to negotiate a fair or equitable resolution. Then you must decide ‘what’ needs to be done, ‘who’ will do it and ‘when’. To close off the incident, reiterate what will be done, by when and who is responsible.

Following the LEAPS Communication Model will help you successfully deal with conflict situations. By Listening, Empathising, Asking, Paraphrasing and Summarising you should be able to move away from the problem and on to a problem-solving situation. This will help you to defuse and manage conflict situations effectively.

Other useful models that can be used in potential conflict situations are Betari’s Box and the Conflict Continuum.

Find them on the Resource Centre here: www.ikontraining.co.uk/our-news/resource-centre