

ARE

Acknowledge - Rephrase - Explore

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1. What is "ARE?"

Acknowledge, Rephrase, Explore (ARE) is a core method for giving the work back to the group which is an essential skill for maintaining the neutral facilitator role and moving groups from talk to action. To achieve results, meeting participants must answer their own questions and not look to the leader/facilitator to answer them for the group

Acknowledge Rephrase Explore is a practice that helps you meet people where they are after you have had a negative reaction and stopped listening. ARE returns you to listening and creates conditions conducive to productive conversations by restoring or sustaining two-way, open-ended communication. ARE helps you hear clearly, affirm what you have heard and engage a person or a group in answering their own questions and solving their own problems.

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2. The elements of ARE:

Acknowledge: **Body language conveys listening.**

- Lean forward.
- Offer a little listening noise, such as “um,” oh, hum.....
- Demonstrate attention through nonverbal cues (e.g. eye contact, nodding).

Rephrase: **Empathetic responses address feelings.**

- Use phrases that reflect your understanding, such as “what I heard you say was...”
- Validate that what you heard is what they said, by using phrases such as “did I hear you clearly?”

Explore: **Give the work back by asking open-ended and forward moving questions**

- Use questions that create deeper understanding and illuminate possibilities, for example, “can you tell me more?” or “as you explore this further what comes to mind?”
- Trust that people can address their own issues, by using phrases such as “what have you learned from what you have tried already?” or “what do you think might work?”

3. ARE: Moving from reaction to response

Listening is one of the hardest skills to master in the work of moving the conversation toward action on a result. To sustain listening, leaders and facilitators must navigate their own reactive energies and those of other participants. The more strategies and practices people have to address issues that evoke negative responses, the better able they are to pivot when conversations become difficult. Building a body and brain for listening requires engaging in reflective practice to identify what triggers you into reaction rather than response.

Through the use of non-verbal signals of listening ARE reconnects you to listening after you have become reactive. When you use body language to show that you are listening appreciatively

you remind yourself to move from a negative reaction to an affirmative response of curiosity and interest.

In conversation for results and action, listening requires our full presence (mind and body). Pay attention to what issues evoke a negative reaction in you:

- In your work what takes you out of your ability to listen?
- What is something people do or say that gets on your nerves?
- In your work on the current result, what phrases actions hook you?
- When do you begin directing the course of action instead of letting the group do its own work?

Your answers to these questions offers you a view into your emotions and what evokes negative reactions. Your awareness of what evokes negative reactions enables you to use ARE to let the group do its own work and build partnerships where everyone can contribute to the work.

4. Practicing ARE.

The following exercise is designed to give you practice using ARE, even in the face of strong opinions or reactive emotions. Using ARE in a practice setting helps you use it during meetings to stay engaged as a participant or to give work back to the group as a facilitator.

With a learning partner, i.e., someone who will work with you to develop skill, use the following five steps to practice ARE. The exercise usually takes about 20 minutes from beginning to end.

1. Review the elements of ARE.
2. Choose a controversial issue on which the two of you disagree and have strong feelings.
 - A controversial issue is one where there are differing points of view that evoke strong emotions and negative reactions. These issues often reflect people's values or beliefs.
3. Decide who will be the facilitator first. You will each have a chance to facilitate the conversation by using ARE while listening to your learning partner talk about the controversial issue.
4. The facilitator **Acknowledges Rephrases and Explores** while his or her learning partner talks about the controversial issue for five minutes.
5. After 5 minutes, the facilitator shares their self-assessment of their use of ARE and their ability to remain non-reactive and elicit and understand their learning partner's point of view.
6. Then the learning partner shares feedback about the impact on them of the facilitator's use of ARE. The feedback is specific and includes a description of what the facilitator did or said, when they said or did it and what feelings or reactions were evoked by what the facilitator did and how they did it.

The learning partner now becomes the facilitator and repeats steps 3 through 6 on the same topic.

5. Reflective Practice to Integrate Learning

After this practice, each person reflects on the experience and explores the use of ARE by answering the following questions.

- What are the controversial issues that evoke a negative reaction? Personally? Professionally?
- What was the impact on me and on my partner of using ARE?
- How can I remember to use ARE to move from reaction to response?
- Where can I practice ARE in order to hold neutral as a facilitator and give the work back?