




Cyber Ambassadors



Professional Skills Training for
CyberInfrastructure Professionals

Facilitator(s): Dylan Perkins
Special Thanks to:
Gail Krovitz - Internet2
Eric Adams - Purdue University





Who are you?



Before we get started tell us about
yourself!





Before we get started



Google Doc



Agenda

- An Introduction to the Cyber Ambassadors Program
- Defining First Contact
- First Contact: Consultation
- Defining Effective Problem Solving
- Solving Ability, Motivation & Interpersonal Problems
- Complex Conversations
- Speaker & Listener Tools
- Wrap Up and Evaluations

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What the Heck is Cyber Ambassadors?



Brief introduction



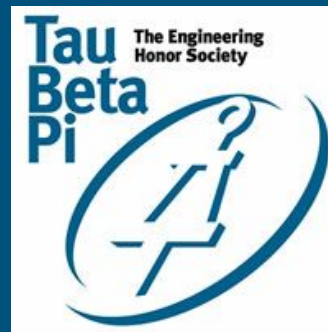
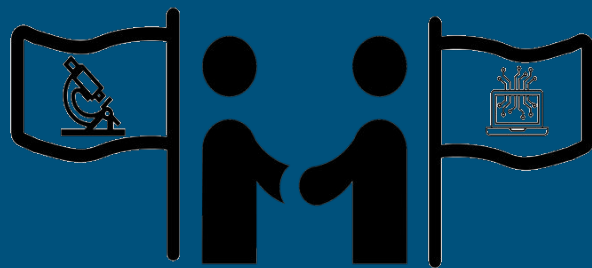
Cyber Ambassadors Project

- NSF training grant
 - Provide professional skills training to CyberInfrastructure (CI) professionals
 - Focus on communication, teamwork, leadership
 - Overarching goal to support interdisciplinary research

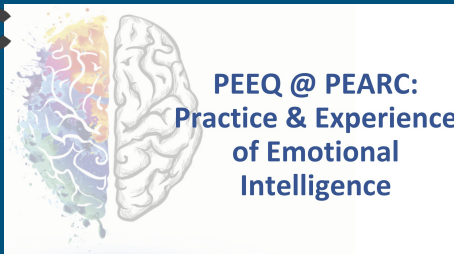


<http://colbrydi.github.io/cyberambassadors>





ResearchSOC



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The Cyber Ambassador Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

- The Cyber Ambassadors Program (55 Min)

COMMUNICATION

- **FIRST CONTACT**
Communicating with a Purpose (70 Min)
- **LET'S TALK**
Communicating about Problems (70 Min)
- **IT'S COMPLICATED**
Communicating About Complexity (65 Min)

TEAMWORK

- **TEAMING UP**
Effective Groups and Meetings (65 Min)
- **LEVELING UP**
Problem Solving and Decision Making (70 Min)

LEADERSHIP

- **LEADING THE TEAM**
Understanding Style and Personality (70 Min)
- **LEADING THE CHANGE**
Equity and Inclusion (60 Min)
- **LEADING WITH PRINCIPLES**
Ethics (50 Min)

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The Approach

Constructivism and Socioculturism

- Learning is an active process of creating meaning from information and experiences
- Learning is most effective when it happens in the context and culture of the learners

Ongoing Research Shows...

...effective professional skills can be taught!

...there are common tools (algorithms) that apply across many scenarios

...role playing / rehearsal activities are effective learning tools for developing professional skills

...practice is most effective in context

Ground Rules

- Assume good intentions
- Keep the lessons, leave the stories
- Oops! / Ouch!
- Unmute/turn on video, ONLY if you want
- What else?...

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First Contact

Communicating with Purpose



Learning Goals

By the end of this section, participants will have the knowledge and skills to:

- Recognize the parameters of “First Contact”
- Explain the role and value of stories during First Contact
- Model effective communications skills for navigating a Consulting First Contact

What is First Contact?

A “New” interaction involving at least 2 of the following

- New People
 - New Ideas
 - New Resources
 - New Contexts
-
- What can I learn?
 - What can I contribute?
 - What are the opportunities?

PEOPLE

- New Faculty
- New Students
- Making introductions

IDEAS

- Sharing successes
- Discussing challenges
- Exploring shared interests



RESOURCES

- Information
- Materials
- Processes

CONTEXTS

- Elevator pitch
- Professional events
- Social occasions

Examples of First Contact

- Meeting someone at a **social event** and discovering shared interests
- Attending a **conference** presentation and talking with the speaker about the connection between their results and your work
- Getting onto an **elevator with the a Dean or VP** and being asked what you study
- Talking with the **statistics consultants** about how best to analyze and interpret your results
- Meeting with a **sales representative** to discuss samples of new materials
- **Someone you don't know** contacts to you because of your technical expertise and asks for advice or assistance

Why is First Contact Important?

Building relationships can benefit you

- What can I learn?
- What opportunities are available?

(70% of job openings are filled by networking)

<https://www.payscale.com/career-news/2017/04/many-jobs-found-networking>

- Building relationships can benefit others
 - What can I contribute?
 - What do I know, that is of value to others?

The Power of Good Stories

“The way you talk about yourself is very powerful. Whether or not you are conscious of it, the way you tell stories of your life frames how people see you, and how you see yourself.”

~ Penelope Trunk

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dN27xfvF3VdvBhrlQ75DaKfW9LA0ICLk/view?usp=sharing>

Crafting a Memorable Story

Explain it to me like I am 12.

Think about the **Content** of your story

- **Personal**

- Who are we?
- Where did we come from?
- What are our values?

- **Professional**

- What do we do?
- Why is it important?
- How do we contribute?
- What do we want to do next?

Think about the **Context** of your story

● Social and Community Activities

- Parties and gatherings
- Shopping and services
- School events and extracurricular activities
- Religious and cultural celebrations

● Professional Events

- Conferences
- Seminars
- Classes
- Research group meetings
- “Consulting” and collaborating

Developing Your “Elevator Pitch”

Where: in what types of situations might you tell your story?

What: what are your key messages? What is most important to share?

How: practice! Aim for a natural delivery, without sounding over rehearsed.

Time: one minute or less! Your polished story should be short and memorable.

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— First Contact: Consulting

Intake Interviews

Office Hours

Requests for Expertise

Opening an Intake Interview

Hi, my name is Larry. I would like to use the HPC for my academic work. How do I get started?

What questions do you ask?

What questions would you ask in an intake interview?



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Opening an Intake Interview

Hi, my name is Larry. I would like to use the HPC for my academic work. How do I get started?

What questions do you ask?

Why are intake interviews important?

Good Intake Interviews

- Ask about their **research**
- Never rush
- **Identify** the fundamental problem(s) being solved
- Work to describe the problem in terms of **computing**
- **Ask how they think the problem should be solved**
- Assess their **ability**
- Identify **assumptions** (yours and theirs)
- You can say “No” without saying No.

Closing an Intake Interview

- Action items
- Follow up times



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Let's Talk:



Communicating about Problems



Learning Goals

By the end of this section, participants will have the knowledge and skills to:

- Describe problem and solution states, and list **three common types of problems**
- Illustrate the process of **diagnosing and solving** ability and motivation problems
- Summarize the requirements for effective communication
- **Define interpersonal problems** and describe approaches for resolving them
- Model effective communications skills for resolving interpersonal problems

How do we define a **problem**?



How do we define a solution?



How do we define a successful solution?

Solve the Problem



Maintain the Relationship

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What are the common types of problems?

Ability: “I can’t do that”

Motivational: “I don’t want to do that”

Interpersonal: “You can’t make me do that!”

Ability Problems

"I can't do this"

- Lack of resources
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of skills
- Lack of experience

Avoid misdiagnosis

- Do not assume you understand the source of the problem
- Ask for ideas
- Listen carefully - is this truly an ability problem?
- Work collaboratively to identify a solution

Motivational Problems

“I don’t want to do this”

- Inconvenient
- Undesirable
- Difficult
- Boring

Communicate consequences

- Natural consequences
(Impersonal -----> Personal)
- Imposed consequences
- Follow up

How do we solve a problem?

1. Define the Problem

What is the goal? What are the barriers to reaching the goal?

2. Identify Possible Solutions

How will we address ability issues? Motivational issues?

3. Make a Decision

What will we do? Who will implement the solution? What is the timeline?

4. Implement the Solution

5. Follow Up



Solving Ability and Motivation Problems



Sounds easy right? Let's try!



Your team has a reporting deadline in two days, right before the start of a 2-week shutdown. Everyone is anxious to take a break and has been pushing hard to get the release finished on time. But this morning's results show new inconsistencies in the data analysis.

What is the problem?

When poll is active, respond at pollev.com/dylanperkins393

Text **DYLANPERKINS393** to **37607** once to join

What type of problem does our scenario describe?

Ability problem

Motivation problem

It's unclear



Your team has a reporting deadline in two days, right before the start of a 2-week shutdown. Everyone is anxious to take a break and has been pushing hard to get the release finished on time. But this morning's results show new inconsistencies in the data analysis.

How will you solve it?

How would you solve the problem in the scenario?



So why is effective problem solving so hard?!



Effective communication requires **shared context**



I need those **results** by **Friday at noon!**



Results of **what?**

Communication Style is Important

We form unconscious opinions about people based on their communication styles

- Accent
- Culture
- Pitch of voice
- Speed and pacing
- Pausing to allow others to speak

We tend to like people with communication styles **similar to our own**

“Many of our motives, so obvious to us,
are never perceived by the people we talk to.
Many instances of rudeness, stubbornness,
inconsiderateness, or refusal to cooperate are really
caused by differences in conversational style.”

~ Deborah Tannen



Solving Interpersonal Problems



Dang it! I didn't mean for it to get out of
control.



What are interpersonal problems?

Pat is too timid

Adrian makes me
feel like a jerk

Chris is rude

Dakota talks too fast

Zoidberg is an Alien

Jamie always picks a fight with me

Why are interpersonal problems hard to resolve?

- **Emotion** can get high
- Arguments can get **muddled**
- Stories get **confused** with facts
- Fool's choice
 - A false dilemma between two (bad) options - "tell a lie or lose a friend"
 - In reality, there are several options, some of which are good



When you Disagree, remember your ABCs

Agree. Start by finding the points where you agree.

Build. Use these points of agreement as a foundation to build the relationship.

Compare. Work together to examine the areas of disagreement and compare both perspectives. You may not always find solutions, but you will gain understanding and build relationships.

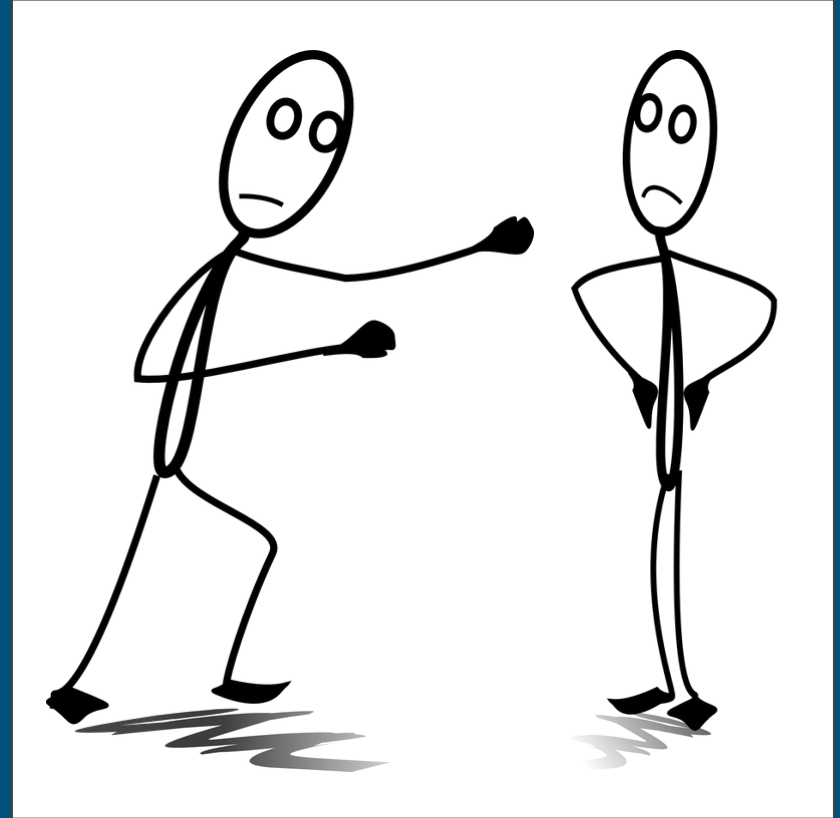
Sometimes you just have different opinions

- Diverse opinions are good
- Acknowledge others' points of view and motivations,
 - even if they differ from yours
- Good leaders make it safe to voice an opinion

Back to psychology...

The Demand / Withdraw Dance

Burrell et al. (2014) "A Meta-Analysis of Demand/Withdraw Interaction Patterns" in *Managing Interpersonal Conflict: Advances Through Meta-Analysis*, Burrell et al. eds.





An Exercise...



What words do you remember?



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A little more psychology...

In conversation, you tend to remember the last thing you hear

When you are feeling defensive, you tend to “fight back”

To communicate a problem effectively
start with **expectations** and end with **observations**



Storytime with Dylan

Names have been changed/redacted



Missing Context in Email

Hi Dylan,

I heard there are LIDAR data in the Peta library. However, I was hoping to get access to the rest of the library, not necessarily for editing and uploading data for now, but simply to have access to the existing data to work with it?

Thanks,
Joe

Missing Context in Email

Joe,

Um, I am not sure what you mean by “the rest of the library...” There is like 800 TB of data on the petaLibrary and some people probably don’t want you having access to their data. Is there a specific project/researcher that you are working with that you know of that you want access to? The PI of the project has to give permission first before I can just give you access.

Best,
Dylan

Missing Context in Email

Hi Dylan,

He's referring to the data repository (not sure what it's called), not individual people's folders. Isn't there a common location where the data is stored?

Thanks,
Brian

Missing Context in Email

Brian,

That is exactly what I am talking about, /petaLibrary.arcc.uwyo/Commons is a common location for data, but there are individual projects under the common area with PIs that range from Engineering, to ecology, to physics and so on. If there is a specific project that you want access to I can certainly give you that but not the whole common area. Only ARCC staff have access to the whole common area.

There are LIDAR data from the WyCEHG project that is called TRACK1 on the petaLibrary. Is that what we are talking about? In that there are ~80 different people who collected data for that project all with different folders inside there. I need to know what data Joe needs access to and someone from that project to confirm it's OK. Like who first told you where the data are stored and then I can probably figure it out?

Best,

Dylan

Missing Context in Email

Oh, for sure, he doesn't need access to all of those peta folders, just for some of the TRACK1 EPSCoR data. I don't know where it's stored, though, I've tried to stay clear of the peta library so far because I never can find what I'm looking for. I guess Dan Walker mentioned something to him about some data that he could get from there. We'll inquire.

Thanks,
Brian

Missing Context in Email

Thanks Dylan,

I did not know this was such a complicated process. I was forwarded this document (attached) and (*Names, redacted*) and Dan Walker all have mentioned that previous data ranging from meteorology data, spatial data, discharge and soil data are all on what seems to be the elusive PETA library. Some of this data would be beneficial for the work I am doing in NoName.

I do not want access to any proprietary projects that are sensitive, merely basic data covering the No Name field site which all the above folks have mentioned to look for on the PETA library.

Joe

Missing Context in Email

- Duration of this exchange - 48 hours
- What are the results?
 - What could I have done better?

Missing Context in Email

Joe,
It's not that complicated or elusive, you just didn't use the terminology that told me what you were asking for and all you said was "I need access to the rest of the library". It's important to know that the petaLibrary is much larger than this one group, it's a core ARCC service ([Link to Wiki](#))

All of these people and the file you attached are associated with the WyCEHG project. Their names or the project would have been the thing to mention. Typically, the PI (or someone the PI has given permission to make requests) will ask me to add someone, I usually don't get requests from students. Sorry to come off as a stingy person, but I have to make sure their data are protected from just any person asking for access without any context of why they need that access.

I added you to the group that they are all apart of and you should now have access to (...) If you have any trouble getting connected, let me know.

Dylan

You've got mail!

- Use an **expected** vs. **observed** structure when communicating problems through email
- Excellent **opportunity** to practice (and revise)
- **Don't fill in the "to" field until the very end**

Email Example - Student not behaving

Dear Blake,

Your jobs are going over resource limits and causing the nodes to go down. You need to stop running them immediately or we will disable your account.

- HPC Team

How can we rewrite this to use the **expectation** and **observation** structure?

Email Example - Expectations

Dear Dr. Xio,

From now on please come to me with all questions and comments instead of the HPC staff. I realize that there is a problem on the system which is impacting your jobs but my staff is trying their best to fix the problem and your constant interruption are distracting them and making fixing the problem take longer.

- Rory

How can we rewrite this to use the expectation and observation structure?

Email Example - Frustration

Dear Ali,

I am sick and tired of you interrupting me during meetings. My opinion is just as important as yours. Please stop.

- Jan

How can we rewrite this to use the expectation and observation structure?

Email Example - Sandwiching

Dear Alexis,

I really like the energy you are bringing to the lab. However, I have noticed that you have stopped writing weekly reports. We really need them. You have also created a wonderful workspace. Keep up the good work.

- Sage

How can we rewrite this to use the expectation and observation structure?

Email Example - Need help in class

Dear Dr. Horton,

I really like your class, however, I am having trouble understanding your accent. Would it be possible to go to Dr. Aderal's section instead?

Thank you,

- Reese

How can we rewrite this to use the **expectation and observation** structure?

Email Example - Student Mentee

Dear Harley,

You are not spending enough time in the lab and therefore not getting enough work done. I need you to either put in the time that is needed or you need to let me know so I can hire a different student to take your place.

- Dr. Slatemore

How can we rewrite this to use the expectation and observation structure?

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It's Complicated:

Communicating about Complexity



Learning Goals

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- Recognize **the conditions** necessary for communicating effectively about complexity
- Describe the three **tools for speakers** during complex conversations
- Model **effective speaking skills** during complex conversations
- Describe the three **tools for listeners** during complex conversations
- Model effective **listening skills** during complex conversations
- Reflect on the training and **identify areas** where they can apply what they've learned

Effective Communication about Complexity

...occurs when information is both shared and understood

...builds trust and fosters relationships

...helps the speaker communicate needs and goals

...helps the listener understand and participate in solutions

Our Context

SPEAKER

- ROLE: initiates the conversation
- GOAL: communicate the problem
- TOOLS:
 - Reducing Jargon
 - Using Good Analogies
 - Checking for Understanding

LISTENER

- ROLE: listens to the speaker
- GOAL: understand the problem
- TOOLS:
 - Reflective / Active Listening
 - Paraphrasing
 - Asking Clarifying Questions

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TOOLS FOR THE SPEAKER



Reducing Jargon

Using Good Analogies

Checking for Understanding



What is “Jargon”?

- According to Google: “Special words or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group and are difficult for others to understand.”
- Common sources of jargon
 - Discipline-specific terms
 - Words with multiple meanings
 - Cultural references
 - Idioms
 - Acronyms



What is an Analogy?

- According to Google: “A comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of clarification or explanation.”



Tool: Using Good Analogies

- A good analogy
 - Fits the **context**
 - Increases **understanding**
- But be cautious!
 - Analogies have **inherent limits**, and will **eventually break down**
 - Analogies can cause confusion if they are not understood – beware the **cultural reference**!

Tool: Check for Understanding

- As the speaker, your goal is to be understood
- Check for understanding by asking questions that encourage the listener to respond
 - Example: “Whew! I just threw out a lot of information. Would you mind sharing what you think is going on so I can see if my explanation made sense?”
 - Example: “So, what questions do you have about the situation I just described?”
- Avoid yes/no questions (“Do you understand?”)



Speaker Example: Embarrassingly Parallel

The Context

Nan is a graduate student using a software program to analyze experimental data; the program takes approximately 10 minutes per input, but produces the correct results. Nan has a new data set with 10,000 inputs and wants to figure out how to speed things up by running on the university's supercomputer, but Nan doesn't have a lot of programming experience and has never used the supercomputing center before.

The Speaker

Jamie is a CI Facilitator who works for the university's supercomputing center. After a quick code review, Jaime can see that Nan's program can easily be reworked to run in parallel.

Jamie's First Attempt

Jamie says: “I’ve looked though your code and I think you can make it go faster. Your problem is Embarrassingly Parallel. You just need to write a submission script to distribute your program across many nodes. Here is a website to help you get started. That makes sense? Right?”

- Did Jamie use any **Jargon**?
- How well do you think Nan now **understands** the problem?
- What **response** will Nan likely have to this explanation?

Jamie's Second Attempt

Jamie: "I've looked through your code and I think we can make it go faster by running it in parallel. Do you know what that means?"

Nan: "No."

Jamie: "This is a type of problem I consider to be pleasantly parallel. Imagine that each of your inputs needs to make a road trip across the USA. **You want them to get to the destination as fast as possible, but you don't care what order they arrive or whether they take the same roads to get there.** Running in parallel is like having many different cars and roads so more of your inputs can go at the same time. We need to write a program to tell the system how to run your inputs on many different computers. **What do you think about this plan?"**



TOOLS FOR THE LISTENER



Active / Reflective Listening

Paraphrasing

Clarifying Questions



Listener Tools

- As CI Facilitators, when we are in the listener role our goal is to understand the problem so that we can help find solutions
 - Use Active / Reflective Listening to make sure the speaker feels heard; this is particularly helpful in situations with strong emotion
 - Use Paraphrasing to make sure that you (the listener) truly understand the situation
 - Use Clarifying Questions to obtain additional information you need to help solve the problem

Tool: Active/Reflective Listening

- Listen with the goal of truly understanding the speaker
 - Pay attention to both words and body language
 - Watch for strong emotions (anger, frustration, worry)
- Reflect back to the speaker what you heard, using “I” statements
 - Correct: “What I understood was...”
 - Incorrect: “You said...”
- If strong emotions are expressed, acknowledge without judgement
 - Correct: “That sounds really frustrating...”
 - Incorrect: “Calm down! You’re blowing this completely out of proportion...”

Tool: Paraphrasing

- Use paraphrasing when you are trying to understand a complex problem
 1. **Listen** to the speaker carefully
 2. In your own words, **state the parts of the situation you understand** (avoid adding jargon!)
 3. Allow the **speaker to confirm**, or to clarify, your understanding
- Paraphrasing is NOT the same as parroting
 - To use an analogy: **paraphrasing is a lens, while parroting is a mirror**

Tool: Ask Clarifying Questions

- As the listener, **your goal is to understand** in order to help solve problems
- Use **clarifying questions** to obtain additional information you need to help
 - “What programming language does your software use?”
 - “Can you tell me a bit more about the team that designed the part?”
 - “Have you ever used this approach before?”

Listener Example: Frustrated PI

The Context

Dana is a PI who stopped by HPC office hours. Researcher-facing CI-Professional Kim is there, and listens as Dana says:

“I am SO frustrated! I have a lot of data I need to process using the Sanborn-Stratta method, which is better than the more common FCFD approach. However, my transient error is much larger than the latent error. I think I can reduce the transient error by increasing the Tallholm threshold, but then the software will not run on my computer. So, I need you to make it run on the supercomputer!”

How should Kim respond, using active listening, paraphrasing, and/or clarifying questions?

How should Kim respond to the frustrated PI?



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Summary

- First Contact
 - New people
 - New ideas
 - New resources
 - New contexts
 - Value of your story
- Let's Talk
 - Problem identification
 - Solving problems
 - Expectations vs Observations
- It's Complicated
 - Speaker Tools
 - Jargon
 - Analogies
 - Check for understanding
 - Listener Tools
 - Active Listening - Using "I" Statements
 - Paraphrasing
 - Clarifying Questions

Lint Prompt

On an index card or paper (something analog!), make a contract with yourself:

- What have you learned today that you'd like to try?
- Where and when will you put this technique to use? For example:
 - At the faculty mixer next week, I'll aim to have two genuine First Contact conversations.
 - During office hours on Thursday, I'll try identifying assumptions (mine and theirs) when consulting with new clients.
- Crumple up the paper and put it in your pocket as a reminder.

Feedback

- Please let us know what you think!
 - What is working well or helpful?
 - Which examples / scenarios can be improved?
 - What other challenges, contexts or situations should we explore?
- Please Fill out the Survey! <https://tinyurl.com/CAfb2021>