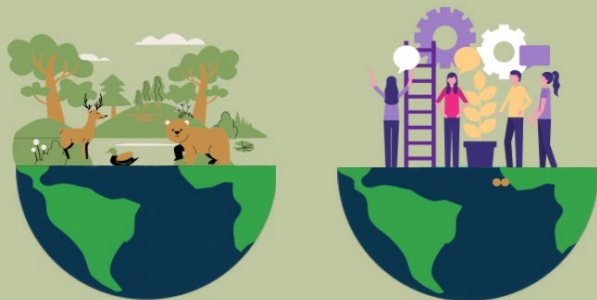




Collaborating for Healthier Communities

# 2024 RCP NETWORK GATHERING

UMass Amherst November 14 8 am - 4 pm



# Connect, Don't Convince!

How to Engage People  
with Different Perspectives

November 14, 2024





**KAREN STRONG**

[karen@strongoutcomes.com](mailto:karen@strongoutcomes.com)



**KAREN  
STRONG**

**LISA  
YEAGER**

**BOBBI  
BLOCK**

[yesandnature@strongoutcomes.com](mailto:yesandnature@strongoutcomes.com)

# Learning Objectives

- Recognize the role of **listening, curiosity, and empathy** in communicating effectively across difference
- Develop interpersonal communication skills through **interactive exercises** as tools that support RCP conservation and engagement work
- Engage with other participants to **apply the skills and behaviors** to real-world challenges and circumstances.

# Get the Most from this Workshop

- 1 Listen actively to the experience of fellow participants.
- 2 Take notes and ask questions.
- 3 Speak from your own experience.
- 4 Reduce distractions such as phones and email.
- 5 Center yourself and be present.
- 6 If you need to take a call/text/email, please step out.

# Myths about Science Communication



Facts change  
minds



Scientific literacy  
is the answer



To change  
behavior,  
change  
individual minds



Big, broad  
impact is  
best

# What Do the Data Say?



Create space for  
group  
conversation



Understand the  
power of values,  
emotions, and  
experience



Change behavior  
to change minds



Tap Into Social  
Connectivity



**exercise**

last word, first word

## EXERCISE: Last Word, First Word

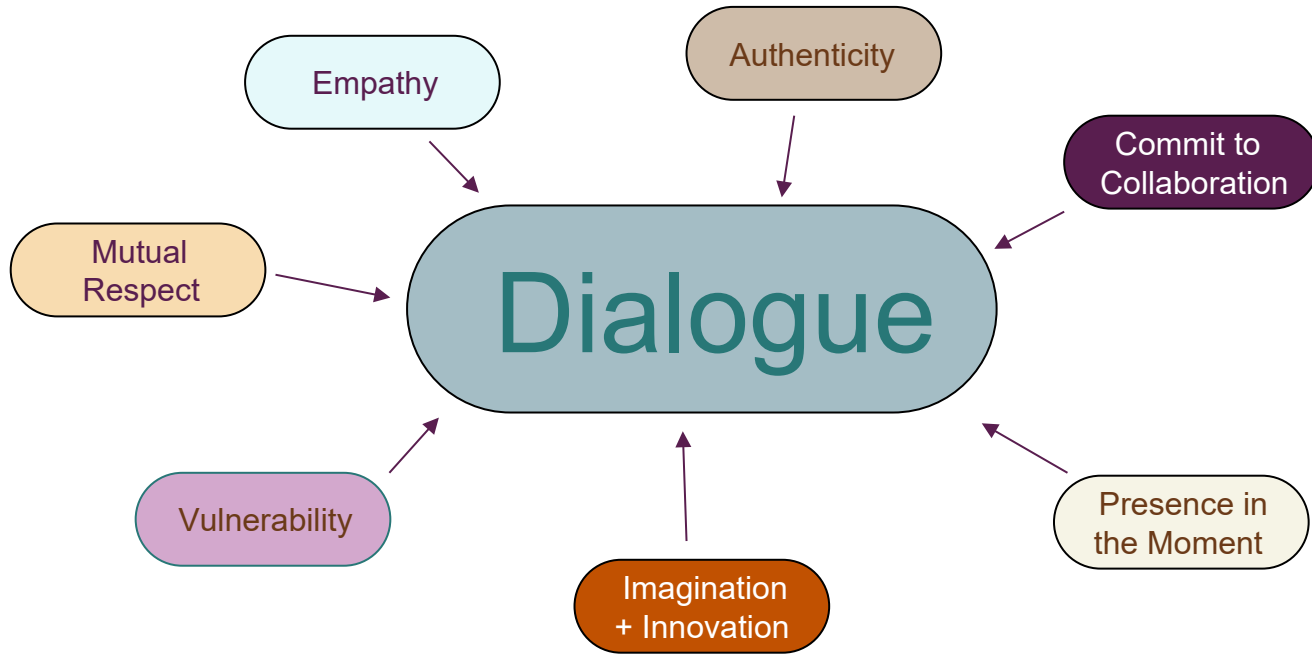
- Breathe. Slow down.
- Practice 'Other-Focused Listening'
- Instead of *'what should I say next,* focus on *'what did they just say?'*



**What Makes a  
Great  
Conversation?**

# DIALOGUE HELPS PEOPLE TALK ACROSS DIFFERENCE







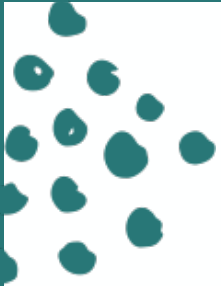
**exercise**  
tell me more

## EXERCISE: Listen to Understand – Round 1

- **Partner A:** Provide an answer to **'Is it important to conserve land?'**
- **Partner B:** **Listen** for something you want to know more about. Just listen and be present.
- About every 30 seconds, **Partner B** should stop and ask: **"I'm curious about \_\_\_\_\_; can you tell me more about that?"** regarding something that Partner A just said.
- **Partner A** responds.

## EXERCISE: Listen to Understand – Round 2

- Same pairs, but switch roles
- **Partner B:** Provide an answer to 'Is it important to conserve land?' AND please add some **misinformation**, or **exaggerate feelings**.
- **Partner A:** **Listen** for something you want to know more about.
- About every 30 seconds, **Partner A** should ask: "**I'm curious about \_\_\_\_\_; can you tell me more about that?**" Only ask to hear more.
- **Partner A** responds.



# empathy and perspective taking





**exercise**  
thank you, because



## EXERCISE: Thank you, Because – Round 1

Choose a low-stakes petty disagreement. For Example:

- **chocolate v. vanilla**
- **dogs v. cats**
- **chunky v. smooth pb**
- **star wars v. star trek**
- **tea v. coffee**

Choose Sides.

Partner A makes an argument for their side.

Before the Person B makes their point, say thank you because... and **say something you genuinely appreciate** about what the other person has said.

## EXERCISE: Thank you, Because – Round 2

Increase the stakes. For  
Example:

- **energy siting v. viewsheds**
- **housing v. conservation**
- **access v. preservation**

Choose Sides.


Partner A makes an argument  
for their side.

Before the Person B makes  
their point, say thank you  
because... and **say something  
you genuinely appreciate**  
about what the other person  
has said.

# In Groups of 3

- *How are you going to apply the behaviors you practiced today?*
- *What kind of conversations might they apply to?*
- *What are you most interested in trying in your next challenging conversation?*



# Takeaways and Resources



## Connect, Don't Convince!

How to Engage People with Different Perspectives

November 14, 2024



## Connect, Don't Convince!

How to Engage People with Different Perspectives  
Takeaways and Resources | 2024 RCP Network Gathering | 11.14.24

Talking across difference is not easy, yet so important to do. **What's not important:** expertise and scientific details. **What is important:** listening, personal connection, and authenticity.

To start a conversation, ask open-ended questions about people's interests and experiences, and listen to their responses. When we authentically ask to hear more from the other person, we are making them feel valued, breaking down barriers to dialogue, and building bridges to trust.

### EXERCISE TAKEAWAYS

**Last Word, First Word** is an exercise in listening and slowing down. Successfully talking about any difficult topic requires slowing your pace and being intentional about your offerings. Slow down and listen. Incorporate words that the other person uses. Converse with the other person, not at them.

**Can You Tell Me More About That?** is an exercise designed to build authentic curiosity and foster dialogue. Be curious about what you hear the other person saying—even if you don't like what you hear. This will make the other person feel heard and valued. When someone feels heard, they are more likely to trust you.

**Thank you, Because** is an exercise in actively listening to people with different perspectives. By showing gratitude for what you genuinely find useful or illuminating, our partners feel heard. This approach can disarm disagreement and we might start to shift our own perspectives in the process.

### REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Alda, A. 2017. [If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look On My Face?](#) Random House, NY.
- O'Neal, K. and Hastings, S.O., 2019. [Teaching Genuine Dialogue: The Potential for Using Improv, Peace & Change](#), 44(4), pp.556-576.
- Toomey, A.H., 2023. [Why facts don't change minds: Insights from cognitive science for the improved communication of conservation research](#). Biological Conservation, 278, p.109886. See also [Facts Don't Change Minds—Social Networks, Group Dialogue, and Stories Do](#)
- Wong, P. 2017. [Engineer's Guide to Improv And Art Games](#). [www.pioslabs.com](#)



[www.climateconversations.net/rcp2024](http://www.climateconversations.net/rcp2024) | password: RCP



[yesandnature@strongoutcomes.com](mailto:yesandnature@strongoutcomes.com)



The next 6-week program  
starts January 17, 2025



**SIGN UP  
FOR THE  
YES + NATURE  
NEWSLETTER**



Regional  
Conservation  
Partnership

NETWORK

2024  
RCP NETWORK  
Gathering



to fill out the  
**SESSION**  
**EVALUATION FORM**

We Welcome Your Feedback



Open The  
Camera App.



Point your camera at a  
QR Code to scan it.

# Collaborating for Healthier Communities



2024 RCP NETWORK GATHERING