

The Ten Essential Elements of Dignity*

1. **Acceptance of Identity:** Give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged. Interact without prejudice or bias.
2. **Inclusion:** Make others feel that they belong, whatever the relationship—whether they are in your family, community, organization, or nation.
3. **Safety:** Put people at ease at two levels: physically, so they feel safe from bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel safe from being humiliated.
4. **Acknowledgment:** Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating, and responding to their concerns, feelings and experiences.
5. **Recognition:** Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help. Be generous with praise.
6. **Fairness:** Treat people justly, with equality, and in an even-handed way according to agreed-on laws and rules.
7. **Benefit of the Doubt:** Start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.
8. **Understanding:** Give people the chance to explain and express their points of view. Actively listen in order to understand them.
9. **Independence:** Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.
10. **Accountability:** Take responsibility for your actions. If you have violated the dignity of another person, apologize. Make a commitment to change your hurtful behaviors.

Levels of Listening*

* This list is adapted from *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict* by Donna Hicks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 25-26.

Empathic (or Pentecost) Listening
(listen to grasp the meaning this has for the other)

Listening for Emotion
(listen for the feelings underneath what the other is saying)

Listening for Logic
(listening to figure out why what the other is saying makes sense to them)

Defensive Listening
(listening for what is wrong/illogical in what the other is saying)

Casual Listening
(sporadic listening in the midst of other distractions)

Listening for Understanding

Paraphrase, check for accuracy, understand the significance, validate feelings

* This graphic is adapted from *Redeeming Conflict: 12 Habits for Christian Leaders* by Ann M. Garrido (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2016), p. 59.

1. Speaker or listener initiates the conversation: “I wanted to talk with you about _____. Is now a good time?”

Speaker speaks.....

2. Mirror: “Let me see if I understood you....(paraphrase).” or “If I heard you accurately, you said....(paraphrase).” Or “So what I hear you saying is....(paraphrase).”

3. Check for accuracy: “Did I get that right?” “Have I understood you?” “Did I hear you accurately?”

Speaker says yes or no....

- If the response is “Yes,” invite the speaker to continue by saying “Tell me more about that” or follow your natural curiosity about what seems most important by saying “Tell me more about....”
- If the response is “No” or “Almost”: invite the speaker to try again. “I’ve missed something. Help me understand what you are saying about....”

[Paraphrase again and check for accuracy]

4. Repeat mirroring and checking for accuracy until the speaker has said what s/he needs to and feels understood.

5. Understand the significance: Check your understanding of why and how the issues are meaningful to the speaker. “Help me understand more about what that means to you.” or “It sounds like you are feeling _____ because _____. Is that right?”

6. Validate: “I can understand why you are feeling _____.”

7. Sometimes this is the end of the interaction. Other times it is helpful to follow up with a question about next steps: “Help me understand what you need now.” Explore this with them using the same process: paraphrase, check for accuracy, understand significance and validate their feelings or needs.

Tips for Listening at a Deeper Level

1. When engaged in an emotional conversation that you have strong opinions about, consider *active listening* as important as presenting your own ideas and opinions.
2. Listen as much with your eyes (for body language) as you do with your ears.
3. Listen as much for what is not being said as for what is being said.
4. Listen to understand feelings as much as you do for facts.
5. When a communication is complex, summarize to make sure your interpretation is accurate.
6. In conflict situations, stop “reloading” (rehearsing what you will say next) and listen carefully.
7. Check out assumptions that you may be making as you listen.
8. Don’t “cross examine” others while listening. If you need to clarify through asking questions, examine the spirit in which they are asked.