

October 8, 2025



# Say What? Relearning Communication

Non-Verbal, Verbal and Listening

Sonya Barsness & Karen Stobbe

Series Host and Moderator: Gigi Amateau, PhD



1

## Welcome!



While you are waiting...you can think on this and put your answer in the Q&A when we're live.

**What are some issues you see your team has when communicating with persons living with dementia?**

2

This series was created by the Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Gerontology for the

**Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)**  
**Nursing Facility Quality Improvement Program (NFQIP) using**  
**Civil Money Penalty (CMP) Reinvestment Funds.**



3

## HOUSEKEEPING

**Please keep your microphone and camera off** during the main presentation.

You'll be invited to unmute and turn on your video during breakout sessions.

**Have a question during the lecture?**

Use the **Q&A tab** anytime—our team is listening!

**At the end of today's session**, we'll share a short survey link (this link will repeat in an email following the session).

This helps us improve and also lets you **request your certificate of attendance**.

**Certificates will be emailed about a week after the event to those who:**

- ✓ Attend at least 75% of the session
- ✓ Participate in at least 75% of polls, questions, or breakout activities

**Attending as a group?**

Please have the registered attendee complete the exit survey and list the names of all group participants.

**This session is being recorded.**

You'll receive a link to the recording a few days after the webinar—to review or share with colleagues.

4

## SERIES PRESENTERS



SONYA BARSNESS  
KAREN STOBBE



5

## A little review from Webinar 1

Person-centered dementia care is an approach that prioritizes the individual's unique identity, preferences, and experiences rather than focusing solely on their diagnosis or symptoms. This care philosophy recognizes that each person with dementia remains a whole individual with a rich history, personal values, and ongoing needs for dignity and respect.



6

## Looking Forward...

This session is focused on the communication elements of verbal, non verbal and listening and sharing with your team. The next 2 webinars will cover other elements of communication such as : Changing Our Behavior, Actions and Reactions, Unmet Needs, Well Being and The Why.

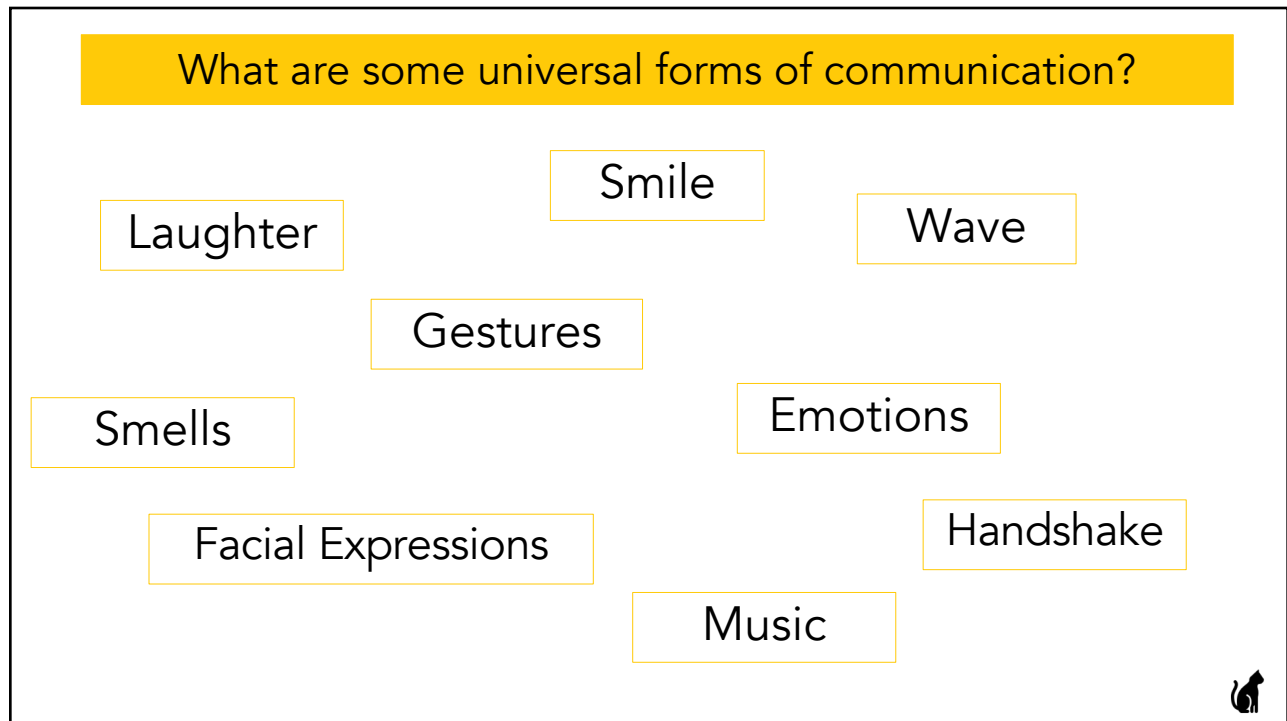


7

What are universal forms of communication?



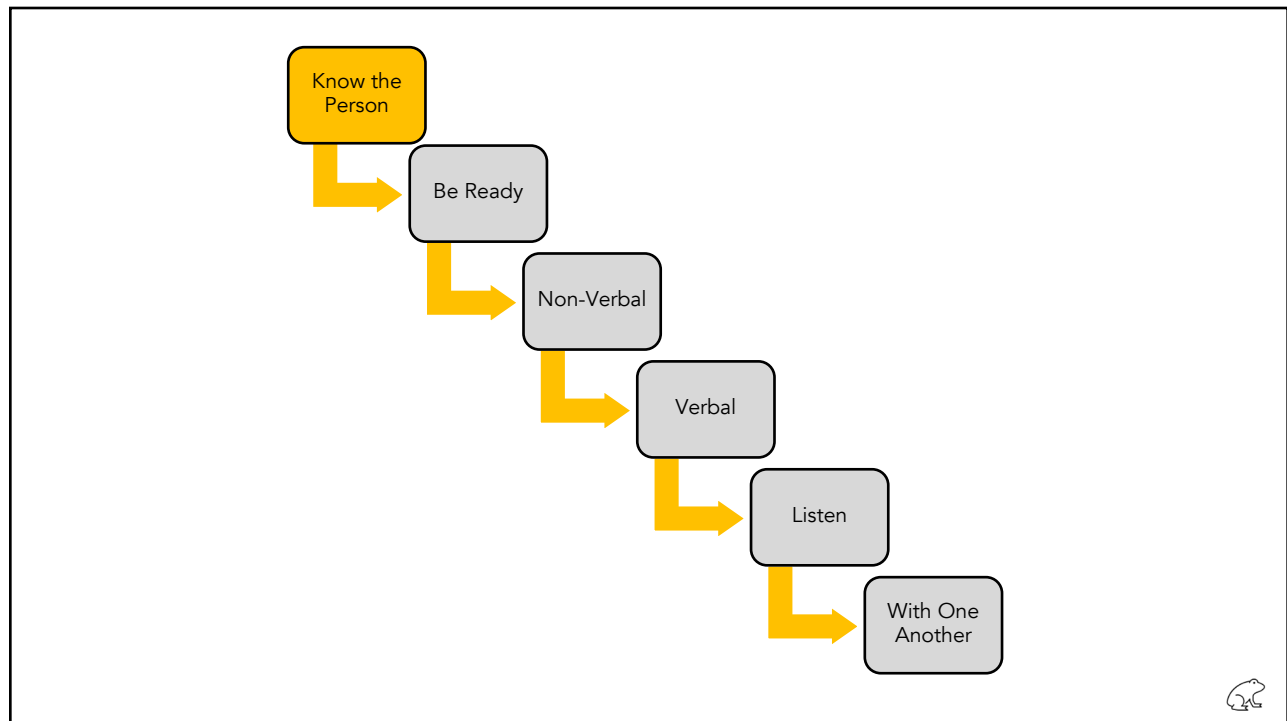
8



9



10



11

## Know the Person

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Filled By \_\_\_\_\_

Answers provided by \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: It is best to fill this out when the new resident is moving in. It's okay if you are not able to answer all the questions. You can fill them out over time if needed. You may want to ask family members the questions too.

**About Me**

I like to be called \_\_\_\_\_

I like to get up around \_\_\_\_\_ in the morning.

First thing I do in the morning \_\_\_\_\_

I like to drink \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ in the morning.

I like to get dressed before /after I eat breakfast. (circle one)

I like to go to bed at \_\_\_\_\_

I like to have \_\_\_\_\_ before bed.

I can go to sleep best when (# of pillows/fan/cold room?/Etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

In the Moment [www.in-the-moment.net](http://www.in-the-moment.net)

I have had this trauma in my life \_\_\_\_\_

One thing that can instantly make my day better is \_\_\_\_\_

I really laugh when \_\_\_\_\_

I love to talk about \_\_\_\_\_

My pet peeve is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite type of music is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite song is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite TV show is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite thing I own is \_\_\_\_\_

My occupation/s were \_\_\_\_\_

My hero is \_\_\_\_\_

In the Moment [www.in-the-moment.net](http://www.in-the-moment.net)

12

## Know the Person

Communication is important not just for “care” but for connecting.



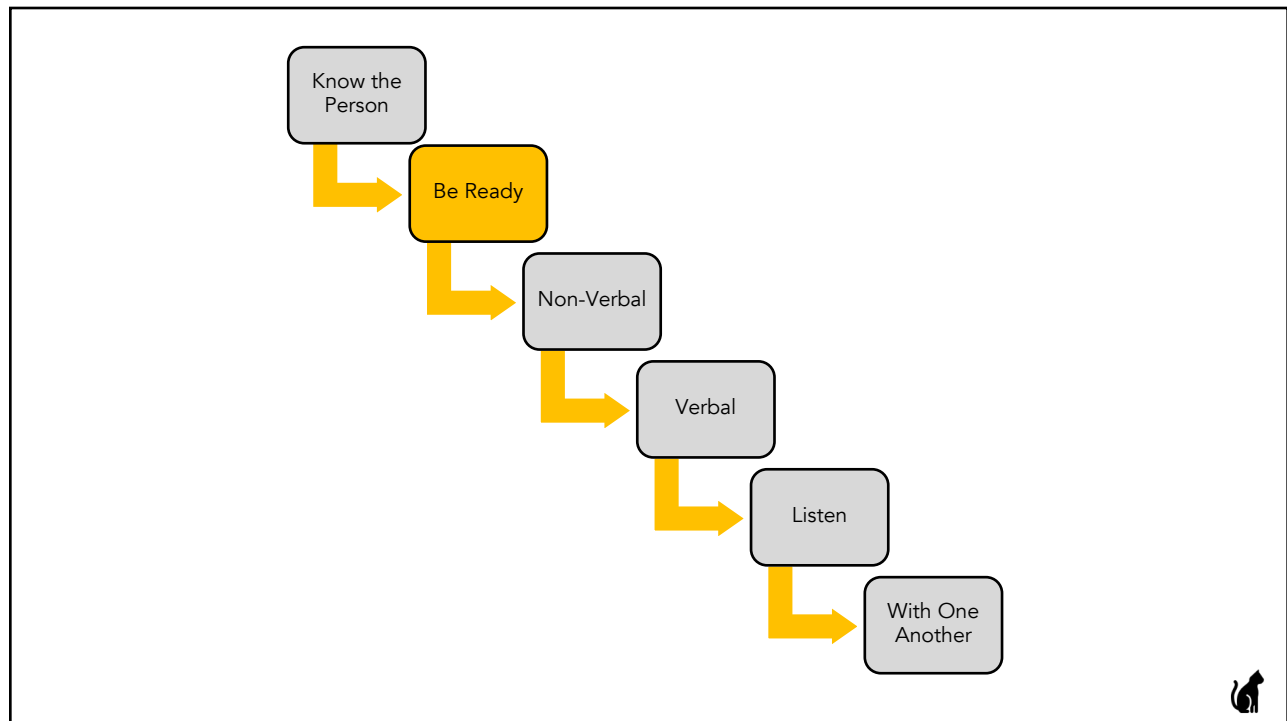
13

## Know the Person

Knowing the person is important because you learn how best to communicate with each person.



14



15

Be ready

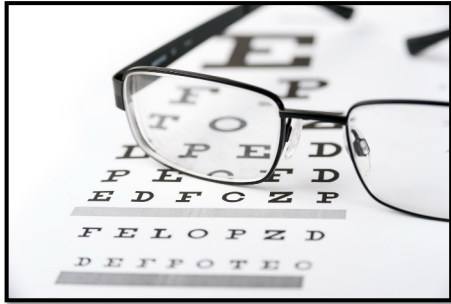
# Are THEY ready to communicate?

A slide with a yellow arrow pointing right containing the text 'Be ready'. Below it is the question 'Are THEY ready to communicate?' in large black font. A small black cat icon is in the bottom right corner.

16



Be ready



17

Be ready



18

Be ready



19

Be ready



20

Be ready

Are YOU ready to  
communicate?



21

Be ready



22



23

Be ready

*People may hear your words, but  
they feel your attitude.*

John C. Maxwell



24

Be ready

Mind your Mindset



25

Be ready



26

Be ready



27

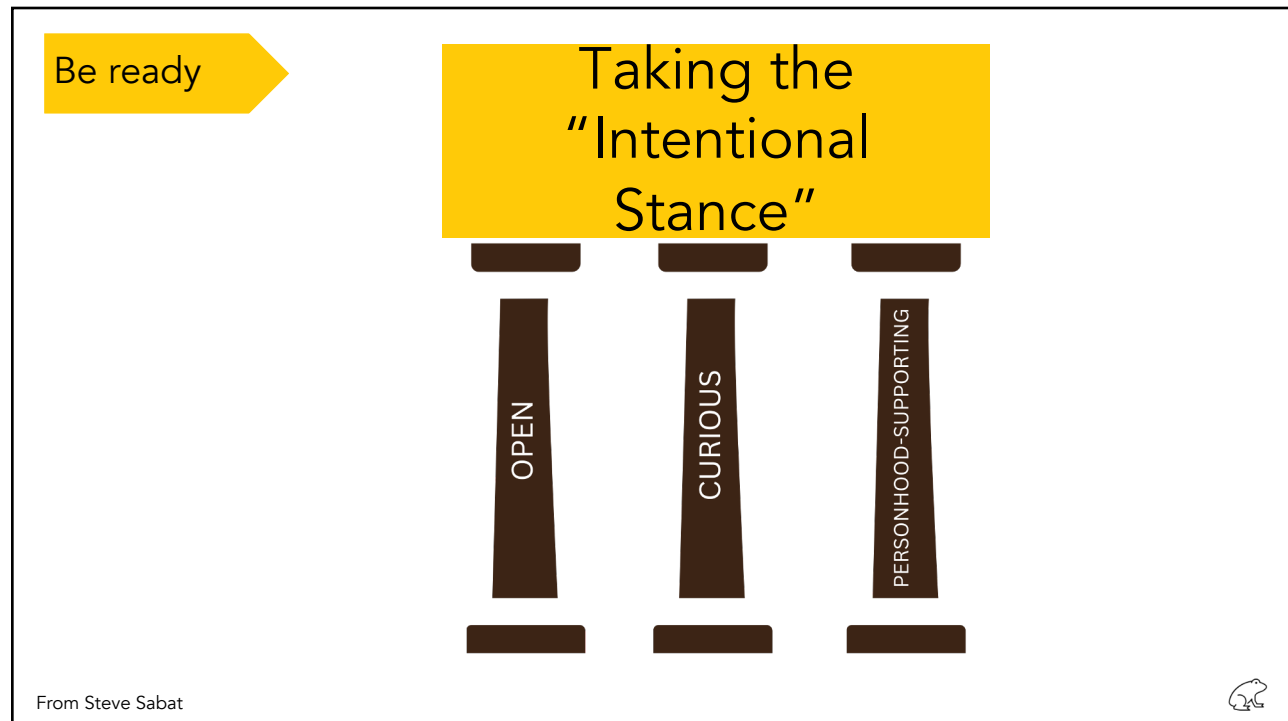
Be ready

# Unconditional Positive Regard

The non-judgmental and complete acceptance and support of a person as a human being, regardless of their words or actions.



28



29

Be ready

Personhood

What makes a person who they are.

The standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being, by others, in the context of relationship and social being.

Seeing the whole person, past their diagnosis.

This slide defines 'Personhood'. It features a yellow arrow pointing right with the text 'Be ready' on the left. In the center is a yellow rectangular box with the word 'Personhood'. Below the box, there are three lines of text: 'What makes a person who they are.', 'The standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being, by others, in the context of relationship and social being.', and 'Seeing the whole person, past their diagnosis.' In the bottom right corner of the slide area is a small cartoon drawing of a person sitting on the ground.

30

Be ready

## Taking the "Intentional Stance "

1. I assume this person is communicating something important.

From Steve Sabat



31

Be ready

## Taking the "Intentional Stance "

2. It is up to me to find out what that is.

From Steve Sabat



32



Be ready

## Taking the "Intentional Stance"

3. I have to enter into their world and see their perspective to do that.

From Steve Sabat



33

Be ready

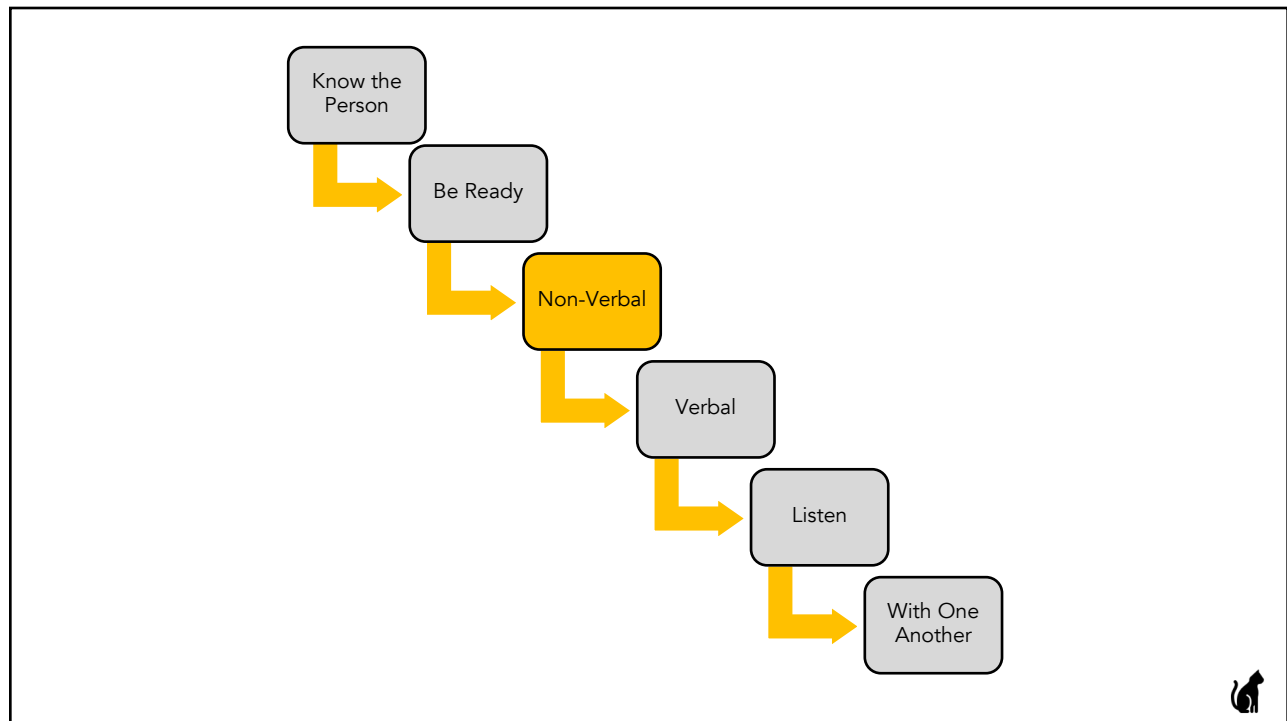
## Taking the "Intentional Stance"

4. Be comfortable with silence and taking it slow.

From Steve Sabat



34



35



36

Non-Verbal

24/7

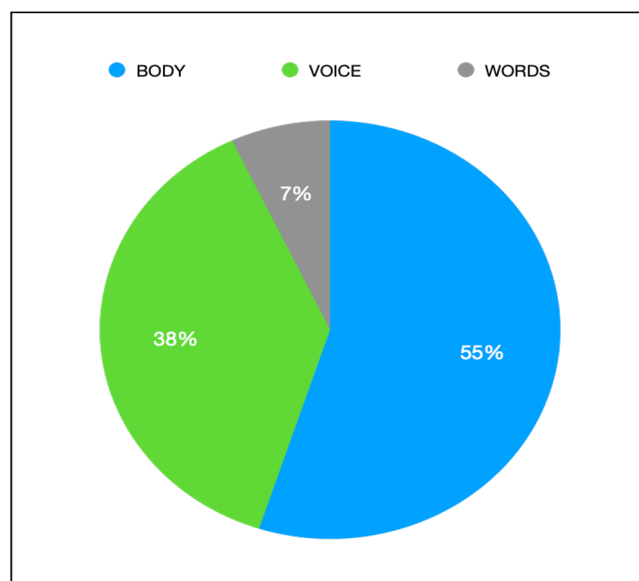


37

Non-Verbal

Body Language &  
Facial Expressions

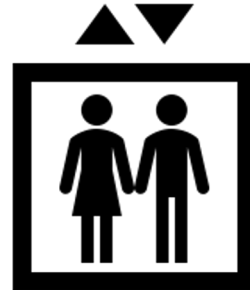
Vocal Characteristics  
tone  
inflection  
volume



38

Non-Verbal

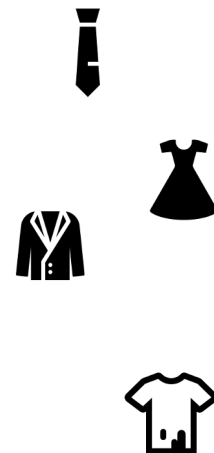
Proximity



39

Non-Verbal

Appearance



40

Non-Verbal

# Gestures



41

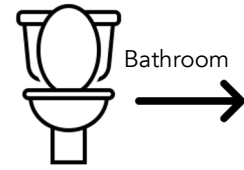
Non-Verbal

# Senses



42

Non-Verbal



Mirroring/Cueing



43

Non-Verbal



44

Non-Verbal

Better way to be seen and heard

We are equals

I have time for you



45

Non-Verbal

The environment can  
communicate  
negatively or positively



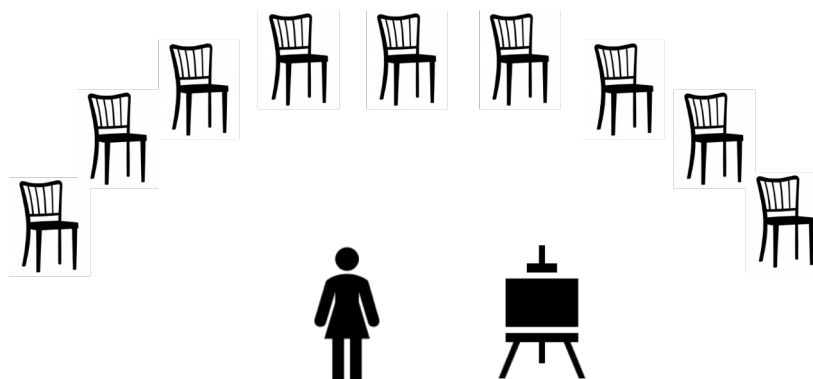
46

Non-Verbal



47

Non-Verbal



48



Non-Verbal



49

Non-Verbal



50

Non-Verbal



51

Non-Verbal



52

Non-Verbal

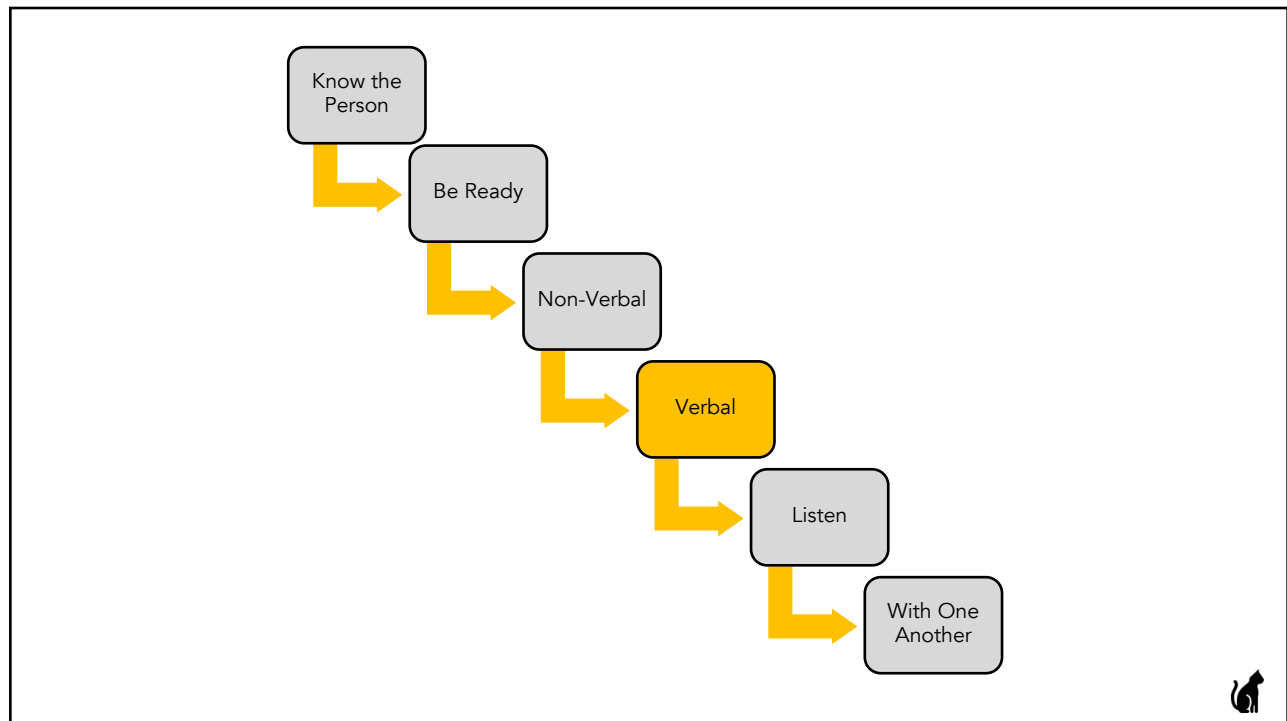


53

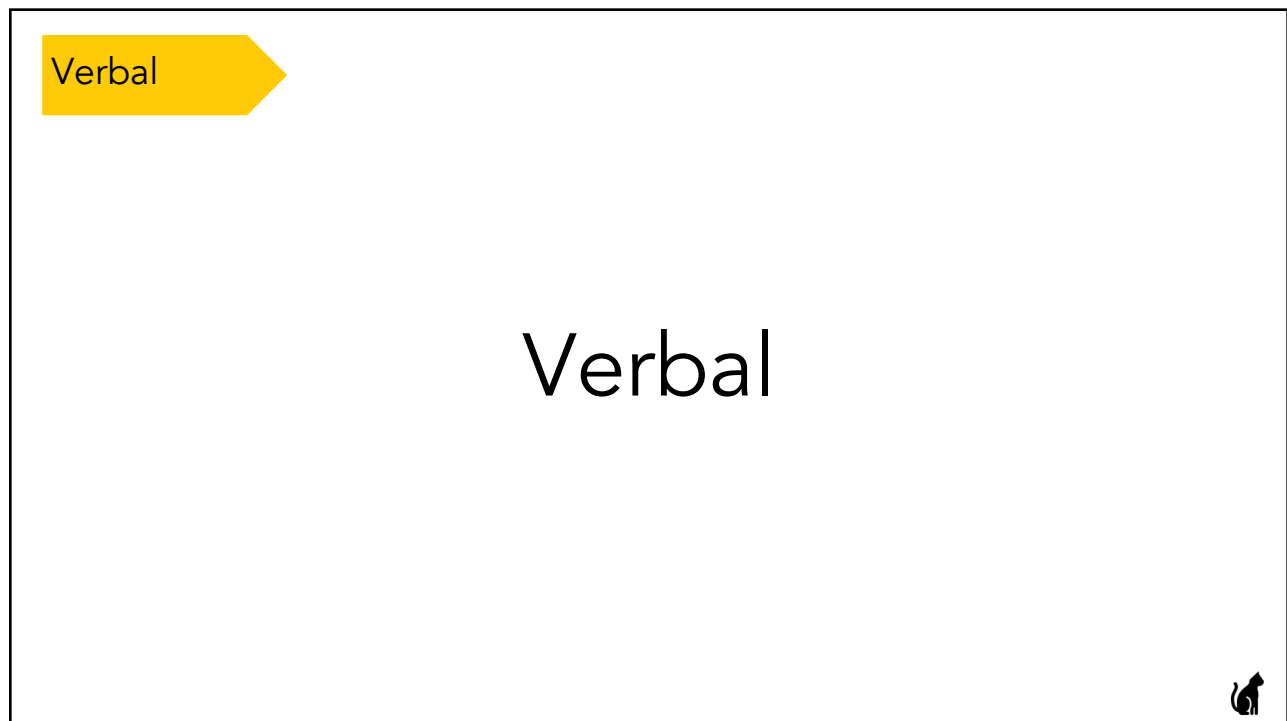
Non-Verbal



54



55



56

Verbal

# Good Morning Videos



57



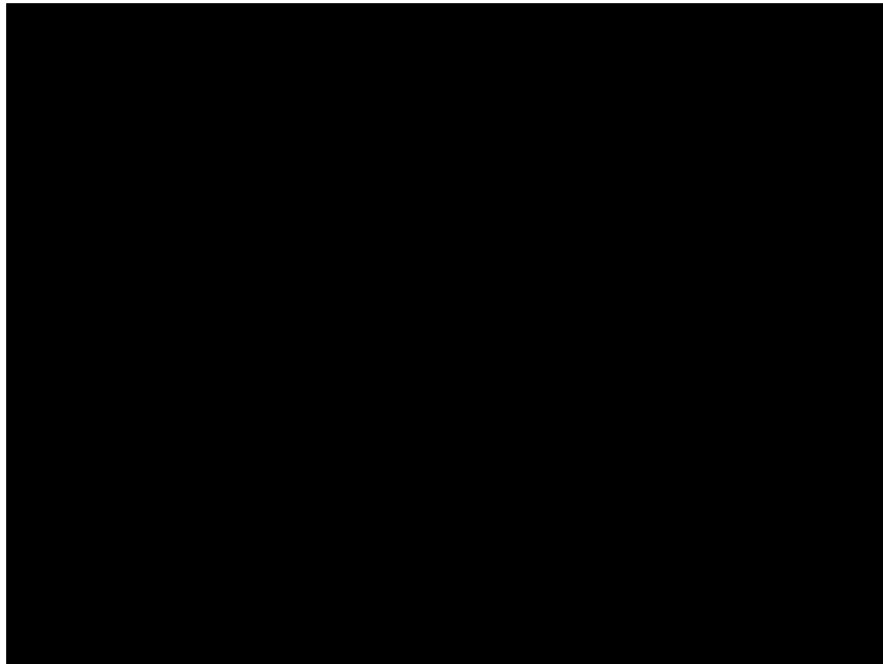
58

Verbal

What did you  
notice?  
Answer in the Q&A



59



60

Verbal

Poll: Check off what  
you saw.



61

Verbal

Speak clearly and slowly  
Be gentle and reassuring  
Keep sentences short and simple  
Give 1 step instructions  
Be specific  
Use preferred names  
Allow plenty of time for comprehension  
Make negatives into positives  
Praise  
Thanks



62

## Verbal

Avoid pronouns  
 Avoid quizzing  
 Avoid direct memory questions  
 Avoid arguing  
 Avoid correcting  
 Avoid Elderspeak  
 Avoid saying No. Can't. Don't.

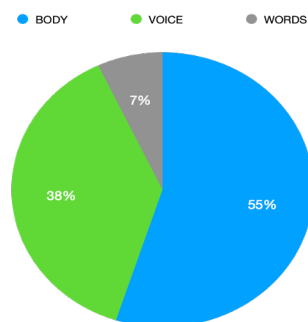


63

## Verbal

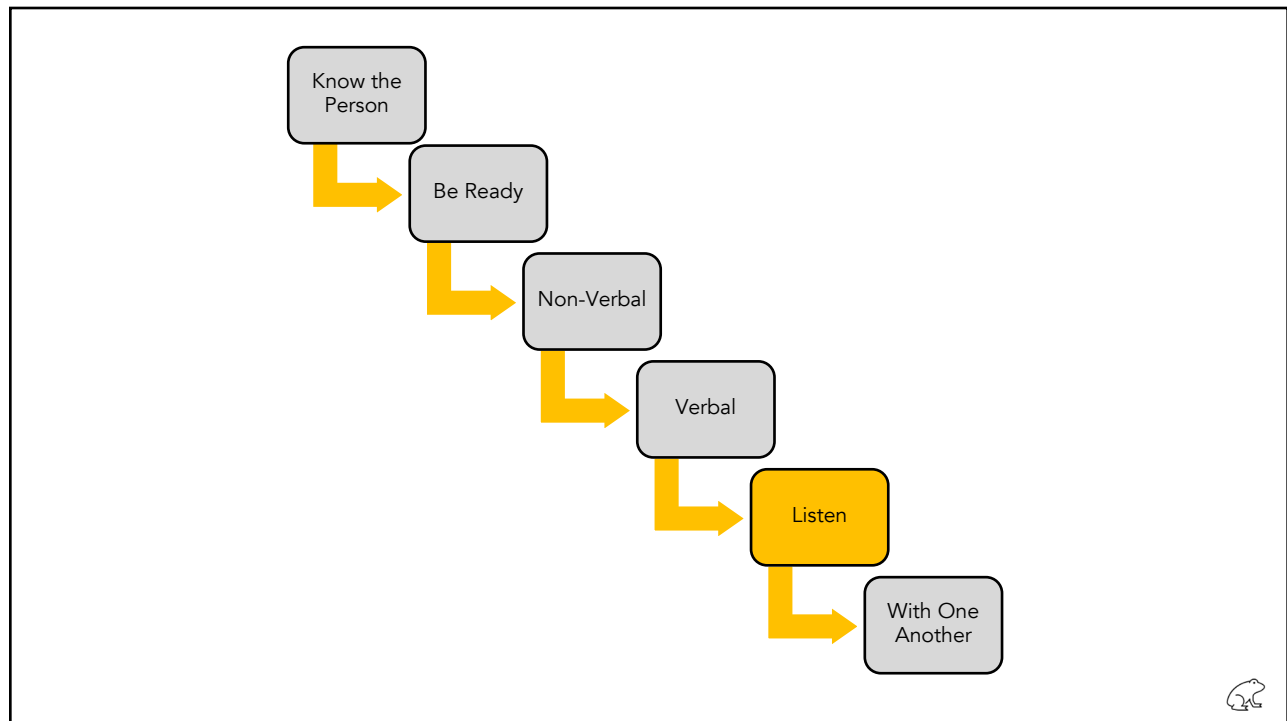
We need to remember

When we communicate verbally, we are also communicating non-verbally. Make sure your words match your actions.

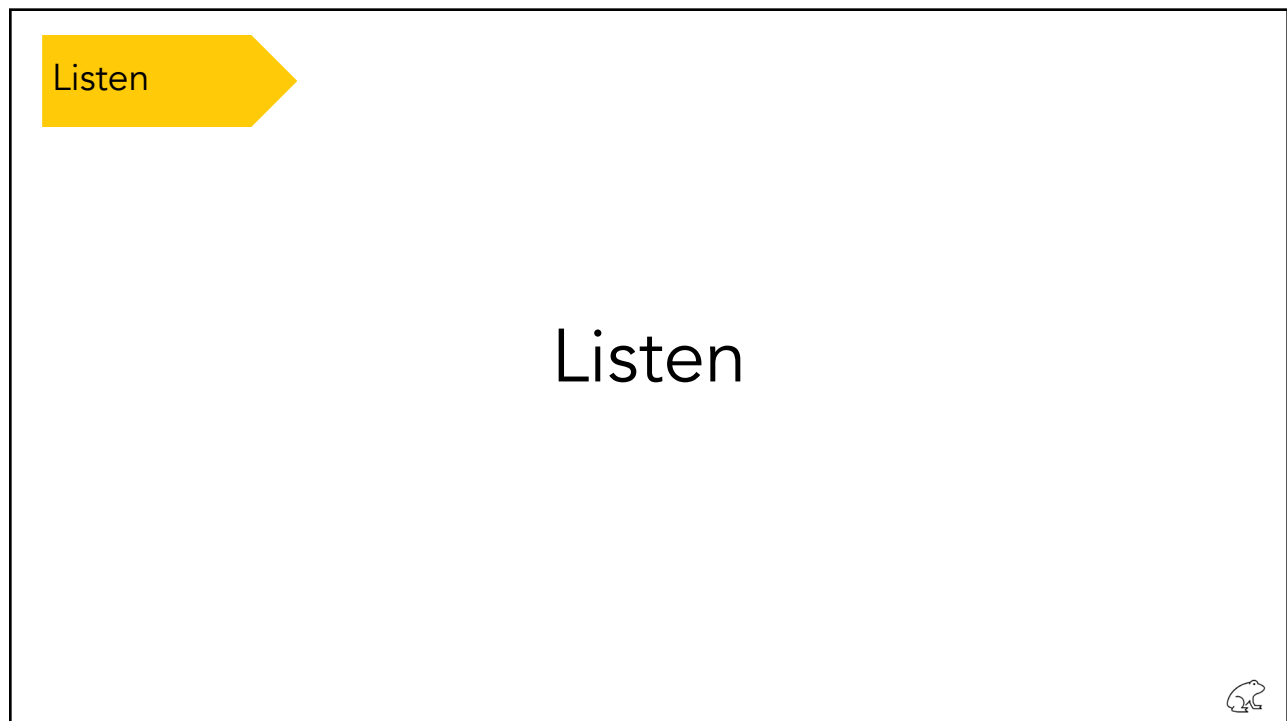


64





65



66



Listen

By listening you create the space for  
the other to experience  
personhood.



67



Listen

Listen to their feelings  
as well as their words.



68

Listen

# Stop talking



69

Listen

# Silence can be powerful



70

Listen

Listen fully  
Mind, Body & Soul



71

Listen

Mind

Defer judgment  
Suspend your ego  
Empathize not Sympathize



72

Listen

Body

Eye Contact/Eye Level  
Lean forward  
Nodding  
Ask clarifying, open-ended questions  
Observe their body language  
Provide feedback



73

Listen

Soul

Be Patient  
Empathize not Sympathize  
Give undivided attention  
Be fully present



74

Listen

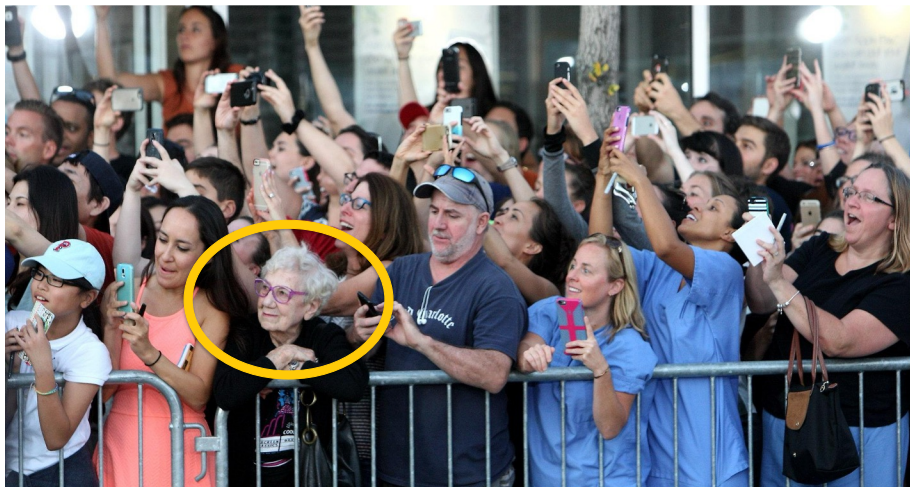
Soul



75

Listen

Soul



76

Listen

Soul



77

Listen

Sometimes the purpose of communication  
from a person with dementia is for them to  
share  
something about themselves that  
means something to them.



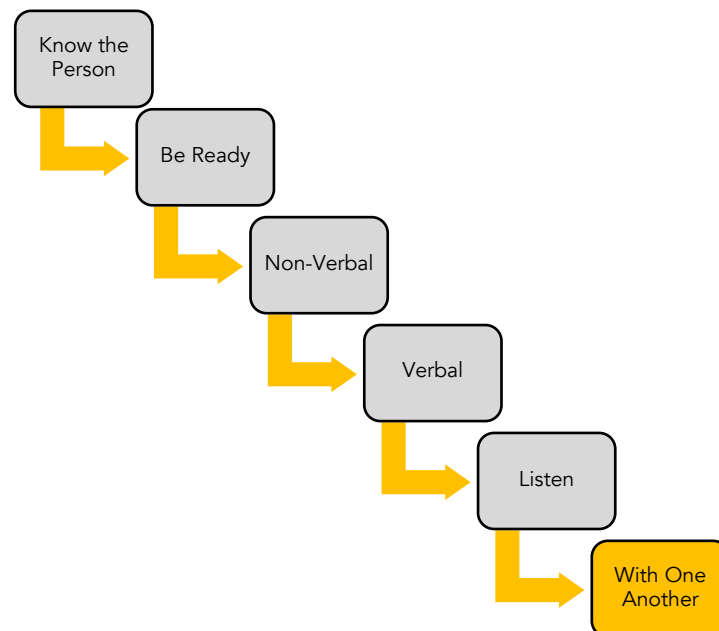
78

## Listen

Most people do not listen with  
the intent to understand;  
they listen with  
the intent to reply.  
- Stephen R.  
Covey



79



80



With One  
Another

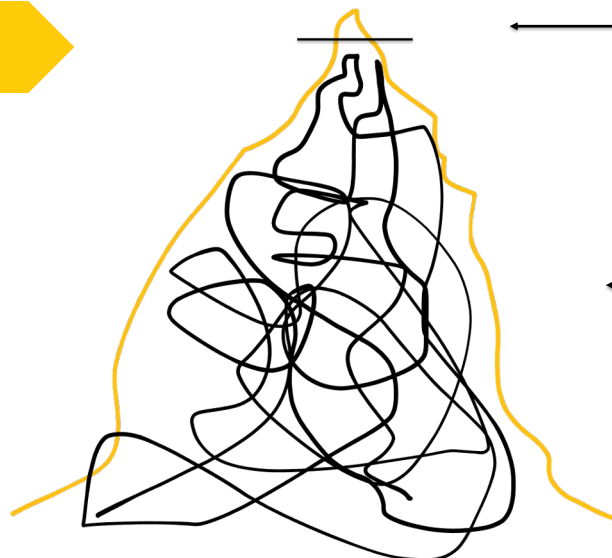
What do you feel is most important  
when communicating with co-workers?

Please put your answers in the Q & A



81

With One  
Another



← What we see

← What's happening



82



With One Another

She has a sick teen that she had to leave home alone.

Just received a cancer diagnosis, but doesn't want anyone to know.

Has chronic pain and can barely get through a shift.


Her car broke down and has no idea what she will do.

83

With One Another

Why not think about communicating with each other with the same respect as with a person living with dementia?



84

Let's come back to the first question

What are some issues you see your team has when communicating with persons living with dementia?

85

What can you do to improve communication?

Practice!

#### Non-Verbal

- Eye Contact
- Eye level
- Sit
- Look at the environment
- Smile day

#### Verbal

- Watch the videos & discuss after
- Have everyone pick 1 thing that they will work on.

#### Listening

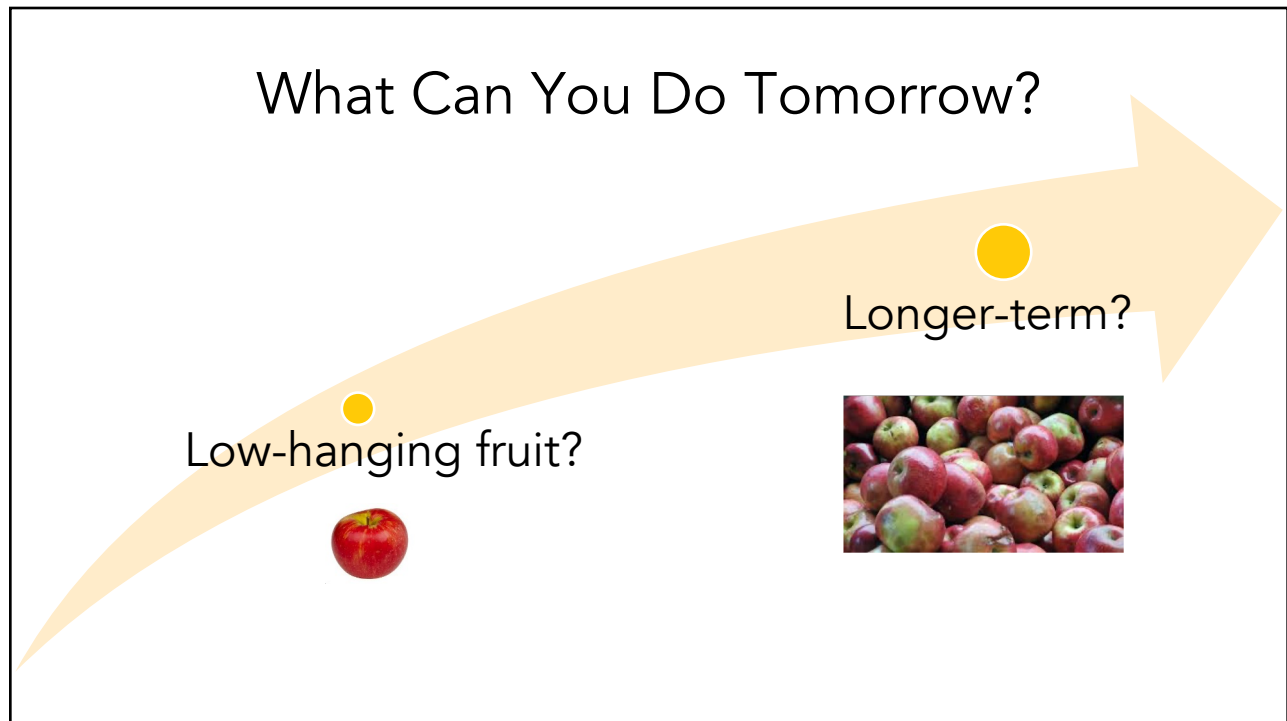
- Listen exercise #1
- Listen exercise #2
- Go with the flow

#### With Each Other

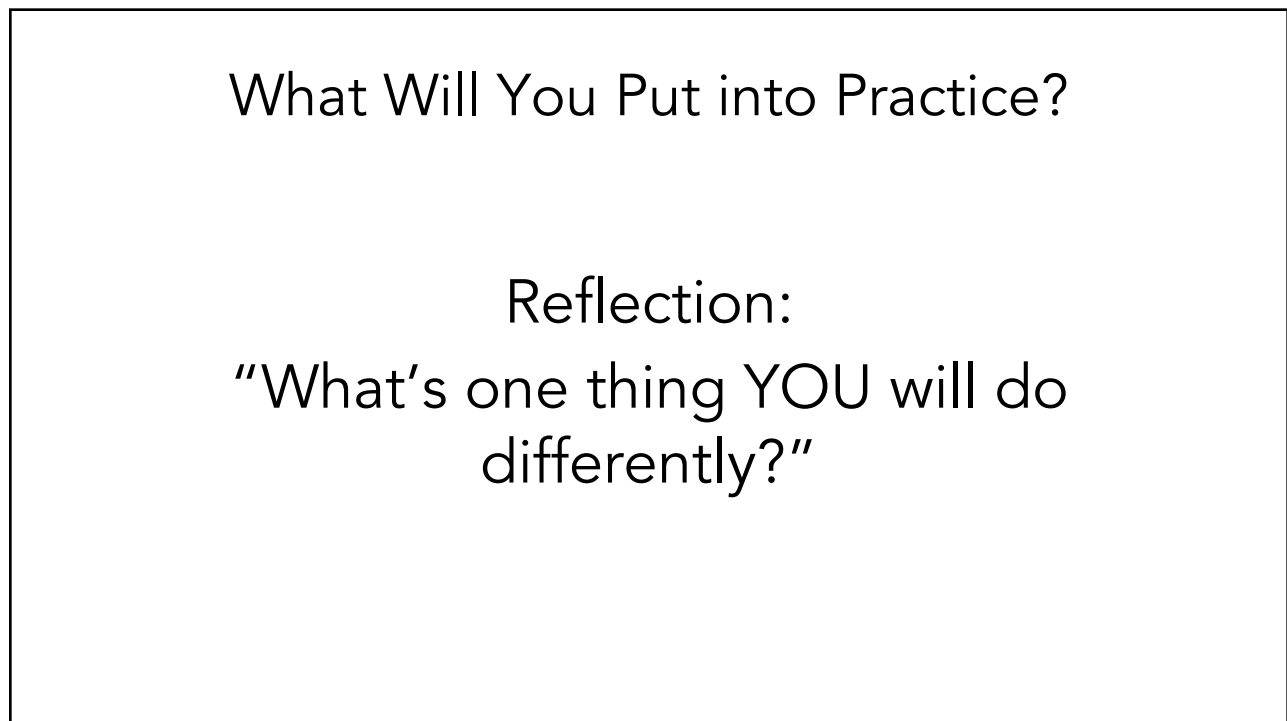
- Talk @ attitude
- Compliments
- How do you want to be corrected?
- Strengths & Weaknesses



86



87



88

What Will You Put into Practice?

Reflection:  
“What’s one thing  
you will bring back to your team?”

89

Thank You!

Let’s continue this conversation.

Karen Stobbe — [kstobbe1@gmail.com](mailto:kstobbe1@gmail.com)

Sonya Barsness — [sonya@sbcgerontology.com](mailto:sonya@sbcgerontology.com)

90

THANK YOU!



Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)  
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91

## REMINDERS

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92



# Huddle-Up 2

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November 12, 2025

Sonya Barsness & Karen Stobbe  
Series Host and Moderator: Gigi Amateau, PhD