

Reclaim the lost art of conversation

With so many of us looking at our smartphones, it's almost quaint to have a face-to-face conversation. Yet there's no replacement for looking into someone's eyes and establishing a bond.

If you're out of practice, you may lapse into bad patterns. Rather than seek to understand others or get to know them better, you may find yourself asserting your point of view or trying to gain their compliance.

To have more rewarding conversations:

Listen for understanding, not agreement. Stay attentive even when someone says something objectionable. Ask follow-up questions to gain a better sense of their thought process. Withhold judgment so that you can keep listening and gathering information with an open mind.

Limit your opining. Tempted to state your opinion? Wait and ask yourself, "Is this a good time?"

Others may not be ready or willing to hear what you think. If they're in the midst of expressing their opinion, let them finish. If they're grappling with a tough issue, let them present both sides.

Don't interrupt to "solve" their dilemma. Set aside your opinion unless or until someone asks for it.

Keep quiet. As soon as a co-worker starts talking about a particular subject, you want to jump in. Perhaps you have a funny story about that topic.

Here's where discipline helps. By keeping quiet and letting others talk, you build trust.

Better yet, don't equate your experience with theirs. If they dread negotiating contracts, don't blab about how much you dislike dealing with attorneys. Just let them vent while staying silent. Signal your understanding with your eye contact and body language.

— Adapted from ["How To Have Better Conversations,"](#) Bridget De Maine, www.collectivehub.com.