Communication Skills for Controversial Topics

IAN WALLACE, PHD
COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGIST
CMA
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## Controversial Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controversial Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>Gun Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
<td>Global War on Terror</td>
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<td>Affordable Care Act</td>
<td>Homeschooling</td>
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<td>(aka Obamacare)</td>
<td>Torture (e.g.,</td>
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<td>Animal Rights</td>
<td>waterboarding)</td>
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<td>Barack Obama</td>
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<td>Drug Legalization &amp;</td>
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<td>Medical Marijuana</td>
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<td>Gay Marriage</td>
<td>What else?</td>
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What makes these topics difficult to discuss?
Barriers to Effective Communication

- **Cognitive biases**
  - E.g., dichotomous thinking (e.g., black-and-white thinking)

- **Poor emotional regulation**
  - E.g., Related to frustration tolerance, anxiety

- **Us-versus-Them mentality**

- Leading to...Negative verbal and non-verbal reactions
  - Aggressive, passive, and passive aggressive
Communication Skills

- Attending, listening, and observing
- Open-ended questions
- Restatements and paraphrasing
- Challenges / Confrontation
- Assertiveness
Communication Example

- Piers Morgan interviews Larry Pratt on CNN
  - Look for examples of effective and ineffective communication
  - Look for the barriers to effective communication
Assertiveness

- Assertive behavior
- Passive / Non-assertive behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Passive-aggressive behavior
Four Corners Exercise
When Can You Be More Assertive?

- Individually, write down one academic or CMA-related situation where you can be more assertive.
- In small groups (3-4), share and discuss your example.
Role Play Practice

- In your same small groups,
  - Design a situation to role play and assign roles
  - Demonstrate 1 non-assertive response and 1 assertive response
    - Use the Types of Assertiveness handout for the assertive response
  - Feedback and discussion from the class
Action Plan

Reflecting on today’s lecture and exercises, identify one or two types of assertion that you can use in a specific situation in this class in the next 1-2 weeks.

- You will then share with your small groups, but not with the entire class
Questions or Comments?

- Ian Wallace, PhD
- Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) at CMA
- (707) 654-1174
- iwallace@csum.edu
Assertive behavior
Passive / Non-assertive behavior
Aggressive behavior
Passive-aggressive behavior