



Seven Norms of Collaboration: A Supporting Toolkit

The Norms of Collaboration

1. Pausing
2. Paraphrasing
3. Posing Questions
4. Putting Ideas on the Table
5. Providing Data
6. Paying Attention to Self and Others
7. Presuming Positive Intentions

The Tools

- ◆ *Norms of Collaboration*
- ◆ *Norms of Collaboration: Annotated*
- ◆ *Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior in a Specific Group...*
- ◆ *Checking Personal Consistency or Summarizing Personal Ratings*
- ◆ *Rating the Consistency of Group Member Behavior*
- ◆ *Checking Group Member Consistency or Summarizing Member Ratings*

This Toolkit is designed to provide resources for developing and sustaining productive group interaction through the practice of seven *Norms of Collaboration*. Consistent use of these *Norms* enhances the quality and productivity of all forms of conversation in any group.

Thinking Collaborative would like to thank Mark Ravlin for his work on this resource.

Topics

Using the Tools

1. Introducing the *Norms*
2. Posting the *Norms*
3. Sustaining Engagement with the *Norms*
4. Assessing Consistency with the *Norms*
 - 4.1 *Norms* Inventory: *Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior in a Specific Group of Which I am a Member*
 - 4.1a Solo Use
 - 4.1b Combining Solo with Group Use
 - 4.2 *Norms* Inventory: *Rating the Consistency of Group Member Behavior*
 - 4.2a Solo Use
 - 4.2b Combining Solo with Group Use – At the Table
 - 4.2c Combining Solo with Group Use – On the Wall
5. *Norms* Inventories: Introductory Applications
 - 5.1 Using Checking Personal Consistency... for Introductory Assessment

Guidelines and Considerations

Using the Tools

1. Introducing the *Norms*

One common method for introducing the *Norms of Collaboration* is to create a shared reading process, using the annotated edition that defines and exemplifies the *Norms*. Group members then engage in reflective conversations about the reading, in pairs or table groups, guided by questions such as the following.

- “What personal connections are you making with this set of *Norms*?”
- “Which of these *Norms* might be most important for your full participation in a group?”
- “Considering these seven *Norms*, which might you find most challenging?”
- “Given your selection, what strategies might you use to focus on this/these?”

2. Posting the *Norms*

Once the *Norms of Collaboration* are introduced, facilitators often post them, creating a third point source of habits for the group. Consider the facilitator to be the first point, the group to be the second point. The *Norms* text in poster form serves as a third point, separate from each of the others. This provides psychological safety for the group to talk about the *Norms* independent of the facilitator: their source is separate and clear for all to see.

3. Sustaining Engagement with the *Norms*

In addition, experienced facilitators often provide each individual with a copy of the annotated edition of the *Norms*, and request that they bring them to each meeting. An additional reminding strategy is to provide each table with a master copy at each meeting, which members see as they arrive. Effective groups address the *Norms* as part of opening and closing most meetings. Opening activities often ask individuals or groups to select one or two *Norms* for particular focus during the session. Closing activities may ask individuals to reflect on decisions they made regarding the focus *Norm*(s), and effects they observed.

4. Assessing Consistency with the *Norms*

4.1 *Norms Inventory: Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior in a Specific Group of Which I am a Member*

“There is no such thing as group behavior. All ‘group behavior’ results from the decisions and actions of individuals. When individual choices align in productive patterns, the group generates positive results (Garmston and Wellman, 1999, p. 33).” Group development is enhanced as individual group members become more conscious of and skillful with the behaviors that comprise the *Norms of Collaboration*.

This tool guides individual group members in assessing analytically the consistency with which they practice the behavior that is promoted by each of the seven *Norms*. The *Inventory* includes twenty-one behaviors, three for each of the seven *Norms*, asking that individual participants rate themselves as members of a specific group that a facilitator names – perhaps the present group, or others in participant work sites.

4.1a Solo Use

The personal behavior *Inventory* may be used on its own, “solo,” when the facilitator’s purpose is to enhance the identified group’s functioning by focusing individual members on their

respective behavioral choices in the group. In this case, the facilitator asks each group member to complete an *Inventory*, per its instructions – naming the specific group. Pairs or table groups then reflect on such questions as,

- “What are you noticing about your perceptions?”

In some circumstances, a facilitator may want the group to reflect on the behavior of a specific Norm or two – for example Paraphrasing, so the inquiry might be,

- “Considering Paraphrasing, what were you paying attention to as you rated yourself on each of the types?”

Either of these might be followed with a growth-focused question such as,

- “What strategies might you use to increase your consistency?”

4.1b Combining Solo with Group Use

The personal behavior *Inventory* may also be combined with the tool called *Checking Personal Consistency / Summarizing Personal Ratings*. After individuals complete their personal behavior *Inventories*, they summarize their results by estimating the average of the three scores for each Norm, marking their averages on a copy of *Checking Personal Consistency / Summarizing Personal Ratings*. This permits ensuing conversation to include both behavioral references from the personal behavior *Inventory*, as well as more general reference to the *Norms* from the summarized, or averaged, scores. A common guiding question for either pairs or table groups is,

- “What are you noticing about the consistency with which you are practicing the *Norms of Collaboration*?”

This might be followed with a growth-focused question such as,

- “What might be important ways for you to increase your consistency?”

4.2 Norms Inventory: Rating the Consistency of Group Member Behavior

This tool guides individual group members, the group as a whole, and table groups when these are present, in assessing the consistency with which group members practice the behaviors that are associated with the seven *Norms of Collaboration*.

4.2a Solo Use

The *Group Member Behavior Inventory* may be used on its own – by a work group, a table group in a larger group context, or a large group – when the facilitator’s assessment is that the group’s productivity will be enhanced by individual members taking a group perspective on the behavior of all of the individual members, at the analytic level. The focus is behavioral; the attention is on the “we” of the group. The facilitator asks each member to complete a *Group Member Behavior Inventory* per its instructions. Pairs or table groups then reflect on questions such as,

- “What are you noticing in your data about the group’s members?”
- “What meaning might you be making, as you consider your data about the group?”

4.2b Combining Solo with Group Use – At the Table

A. The *Group Member Behavior Inventory* may also be used with the tool for *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings*, when the facilitator’s assessment is

that the group would benefit from viewing the members' data at the normative level – in contrast to the behavioral level above. When individuals have completed their *Group Member Behavior Inventories*, each summarizes their respective data by estimating the averages of their ratings on a *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings* tool. In this process, each group member collates data individually. The facilitator may then ask that pairs or table groups reflect on their data about how consistently the *Norms* are practiced in the group. A common guiding question is,

- “What observations are you making about the group members' practice of the *Norms*?”

B. The facilitator's assessment may be that the group would benefit from considering its members' data in a format in which all of the information is included in a single view. In such cases, the facilitator may ask the group to combine the *Norms* data of each individual on a single *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings* tool. Members mark their respective estimated averages on a group copy of the tool, each in a different color. The facilitator may guide reflection on these data with questions such as,

- “What are your observations about the perceptions of the group's members?”

The facilitator might follow this with a growth-focused question such as,

- “What Norm(s) might the group focus on, to increase its productivity and satisfaction?”
 - “Given the potential of focusing on (a Norm), what strategies might group members use to accomplish this?”

At this point, the facilitator may choose to ask the group's members to commit to a specific focus of improvement, based on this conversation. In this event, it is important that the facilitator return to the commitment toward the conclusion of the meeting, to provide group members with an opportunity to reflect on the results of their improvement focus.

4.2c Combining Solo with Group Use – On the Wall

A facilitator may make the assessment that a group's purpose(s) may be served, and/or its productivity increased, by public consideration of its *Norms* data. This can be accomplished in at least two ways. In both, the *Norms* data of the group are posted on the wall. This has the effect of distancing the data from the group to a third point, which can increase the psychological safety to engage in conversation about the data.

- A. This process is a variation on Combining Solo and Group Use – At the Table, described above. Instead of combining the individuals' *Norms* data onto a single *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings* tool in its standard size, each group is provided with a piece of chart paper. The facilitator asks that a recorder in each group recreate the scales of the *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings* tool on the chart paper, in black. Members then mark their respective estimated averages on the chart edition of *Checking Group Member Consistency / Summarizing Member Ratings* tool, using a different color for each member. The facilitator then guides consideration of the data with inquiries similar to those above.
- B. A facilitator may use this opportunity to create a more structured study of group data. This can be done by following the process described in 1, just above, with the following addition.

The facilitator introduces the process of *Here's What!, So What?, Now What?* to guide the group's consideration of the data. This process uses a three-column protocol, illustrated below. The intention is to support a group's members in describing what they see in the data (*Here's What!*), then and separately considering the meanings of the data (*So What?*), and finally what actions the group might take (*Now What?*). This process is particularly helpful to groups that need to learn to observe data, separately from assigning meaning, and to hold off on action planning until their study of the data is complete. More extensive description and explanation of this process and others related to the study of data can be found in *Data-Driven Dialogue* (Wellman and Lipton, 2004). (www.miravia.com).

<i>Here's What!</i>	<i>So What?</i>	<i>Now What?</i>

5. Norms Inventories: Introductory Applications

The applications of the *Norms* inventories described above begin with individuals rating their personal consistency or that of group members analytically, at the behavioral level. The behavioral perceptions data may then be averaged to yield summaries at the level of the seven *Norms*.

Beginning with behavioral ratings permits highly focused conversation, which a facilitator may assess to be of particular importance in advancing a group's effectiveness. It also calls for significant knowledge about each of the *Norms*, such as the three purposes for paraphrasing – to clarify, to organize, and to abstract. It also calls for a significant investment of group time, customarily in short supply.

Assessing consistency with the *Norms* can also begin at the normative level, as early as when a group first becomes familiar with the *Norms*. Facilitators find this approach useful for introducing self-assessment early in the process of learning and applying the *Norms*, with groups that are not yet fully versed in the key concepts and behaviors associated with the *Norms*, and when time is at a premium.

5.1 Using *Checking Personal Consistency/ Summarizing Personal Ratings* for Introductory Assessment

After introducing the *Norms* (Section 1), the facilitator invites each participant to estimate levels of personal consistency with the tool for *Checking Personal Consistency / Summarizing Personal Ratings*. This may be done individually only (see Section 4.1a), supported by pairs or table group conversation.

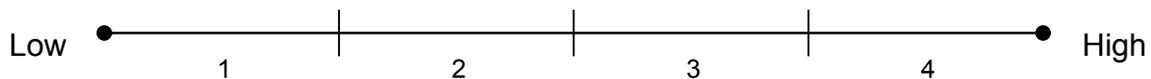
It may also be extended into combining the individual data into a group display and conversation (see Section 4.1b). This might also be extended to posting the group's data, as in section 4.2c. Facilitators often use such a public third point display of the data to inform a group's conversation about which Norm or two the group might focus on to improve its members' consistency and the group's performance.

As groups construct deeper knowledge and more become more consistent in their use of the *Norms*, experienced facilitators often increase the specificity of subsequent self-assessment activities by shifting to the *Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior...* tool, described in section 4.1 above.

Guidelines and Considerations

Using the Consistency Scales

One scale is used repeatedly in all of the rating tools.



The scale is designed for flexibility and estimation. Facilitators encourage group members to use the scale to best reflect their perceptions. The numbers on the scale describe ranges (1, 2, 3, 4). One member's perception may be a "low 2." This person would make a mark somewhere to the left of the number 2 and to the right of the crossbar below it. Another member may perceive a "high 3." The corresponding mark would be placed to the right of the number 3 and to the left of the crossbar above it. Facilitators may find it helpful to advise group members to not over-think their responses; one's first inclination is likely to be important.

Estimating Averages

Given the flexibility of the consistency scale, precise mathematical calculation of averages would not be suitable. Facilitators should be explicit about this, and be prepared to support group members who are accustomed to considering numbers only with calculator in-hand.

Working Agreements Complement the *Norms*

The *Norms of Collaboration* are based on decades of research and practice in the fields of counseling, coaching, group dynamics, facilitation, and professional learning communities. They constitute best practice throughout these fields, with results documented in both education (Kennedy, A., Deuel, A., Nelson, T, and Slavit, D. "Requiring Collaboration or Distributing Leadership?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol, 92, No. 8, 2011, pp. 20-24) and business (Losada, M. and Heaphy, E. "The Role of Positivity and Connectivity in Performance of Business Teams: A Nonlinear Dynamic Model," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 47, No. 6, 2004, pp. 740-765).

Working Agreements, on the other hand, are specific to a group. They define the expected behavior among group members in areas that the members decide will support their effectiveness in reaching important outcomes. Like the *Norms of Collaboration*, they are based on beliefs, values, and consensus among group members. An experienced facilitator assesses when to engage a group in defining areas that call for the support of *Working Agreements*, and in developing the language that the group's members support.

In some situations, the *Working Agreements* may be for long-term use by the group, in which case they are posted alongside the *Norms of Collaboration*. Under other circumstances, they may be developed for a specific meeting. Common themes addressed by *Working Agreements* are focus on the topic-at-hand, respecting all members' points of view, starting and ending on time, and being prepared for meetings.

Working Agreements become effective as the members of a group engage in their development, and regularly self-assess to assure that group members' behavioral choices and decisions align with the *Working Agreements*. They are not called for in all groups. Experienced facilitators learn to observe and interpret the performance of a group's members, as the basis of a decision to engage the members in developing *Working Agreements*. It is essential that the processes for developing and supporting them engage members in ways that build shared ownership.

Consistent Attention to the *Norms of Collaboration* and *Working Agreements*

Group productivity and satisfaction increase with growth in the consistency with which group members practice the behaviors that are associated with the *Norms of Collaboration* and the group's *Working Agreements*. The *Norms* are intended for use among group members both in meetings and in general, whereas *Working Agreements* pertain to members' behavior in the group's meetings. Realizing the collaborative potential of the *Norms* and *Working Agreements* requires consistent and repeated attention. Facilitators develop a repertoire of ways to address the *Norms* and the group's *Agreements*, so that this can become a regular opening and closing event at most or all group meetings.

Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman (2016). *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* (3rd Edition). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

<http://www.thinkingcollaborative.com/product/adaptive-schools-3rd-edition/>

Norms of Collaboration

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Norms of Collaboration

Annotated

1. Pausing

Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

2. Paraphrasing

Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you – “So...” or “As you are...” or “You’re thinking...” – and following the starter with an efficient paraphrase assists members of the group in hearing and understanding one another as they converse and make decisions.

3. Posing Questions

Two intentions of posing questions are to explore and to specify thinking. Questions may be posed to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations, and to invite others to inquire into their thinking. For example, “What might be some conjectures you are exploring?” Use focusing questions such as, “Which students, specifically?” or “What might be an example of that?” to increase the clarity and precision of group members’ thinking. Inquire into others’ ideas before advocating one’s own.

4. Putting Ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue and discussion. Label the intention of your comments. For example: “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...” or “Another consideration might be...”.

5. Providing Data

Providing data, both qualitative and quantitative, in a variety of forms supports group members in constructing shared understanding from their work. Data have no meaning beyond that which we make of them; shared meaning develops from collaboratively exploring, analyzing, and interpreting data.

6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion are facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, and is aware of what (s)he is saying and how it is said as well as how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning styles when planning, facilitating, and participating in group meetings and conversations.

7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and discussion, and prevents unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in speech is one manifestation of this norm.



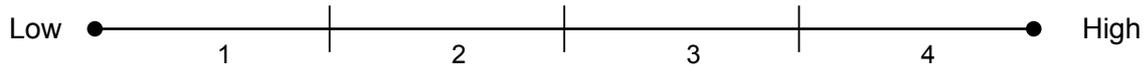
Norms Inventory¹⁰

Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior In a Specific Group of Which I am a Member

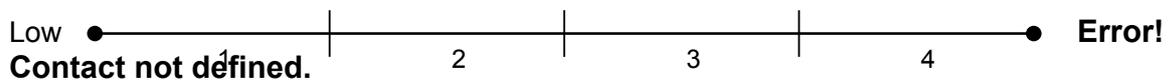
Place a mark on each scale, to reflect your perception of your personal behavior in a specified group of which you are a member.

1. Pausing

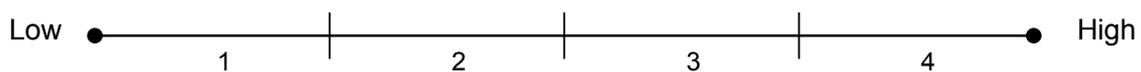
A. I pause after asking questions.



B. I pause after others speak to reflect before responding.

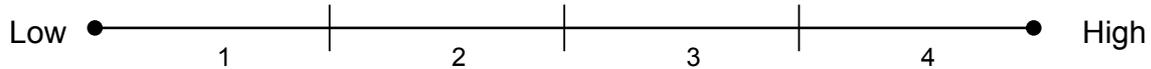


C. I pause before asking questions to permit thoughtful construction.

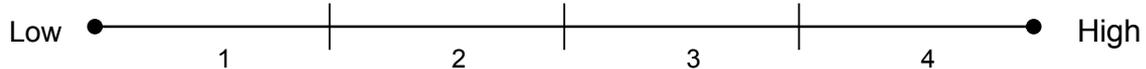


2. Paraphrasing

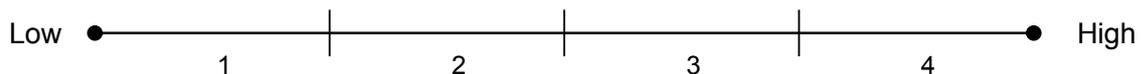
A. I listen and paraphrase to acknowledge thoughts and feelings.



B. I listen and paraphrase to organize thoughts and feelings.

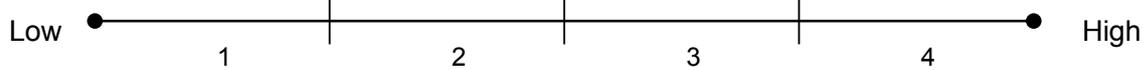


C. I listen and paraphrase to shift levels of abstraction.

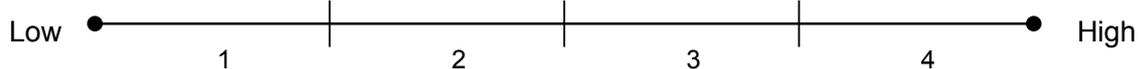


3. Posing Questions

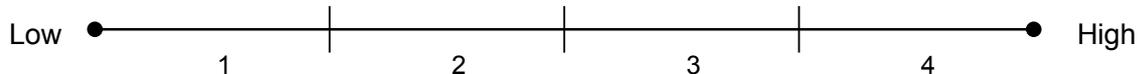
A. I pose questions to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.



B. I inquire before putting my ideas on the table, or advocating.

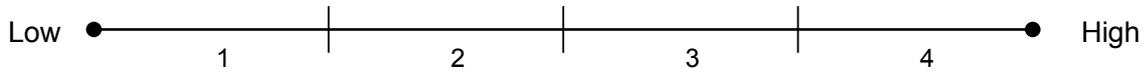


C. I seek specificity of data, assumptions, generalizations, and the meaning of words.

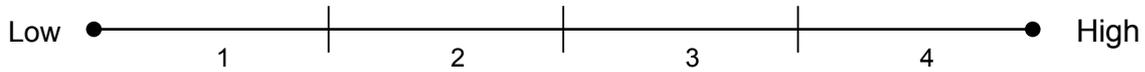


4. Putting Ideas on the Table and Pulling Them Off

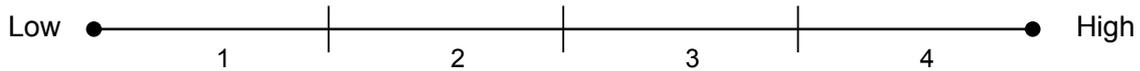
A. We state the intentions of our communications.



B. We provide relevant facts, ideas, opinions, and inferences.

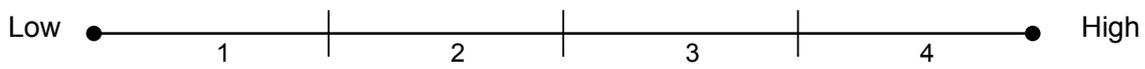


C. We retract or announce modification of previously offered ideas, opinions, and points of view.

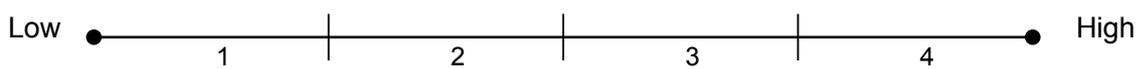


5. Providing Data

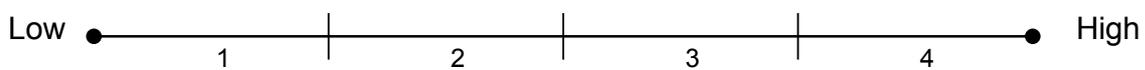
A. We present specific, measurable, observable information.



B. We present data without judgments, opinions, or inferences.

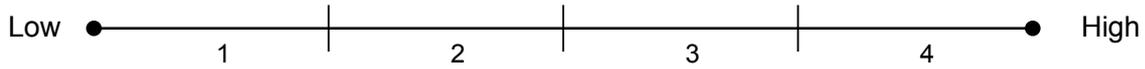


C. We offer multiple types of data to broaden understanding.

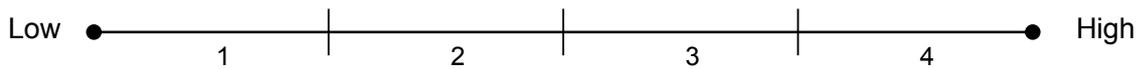


6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

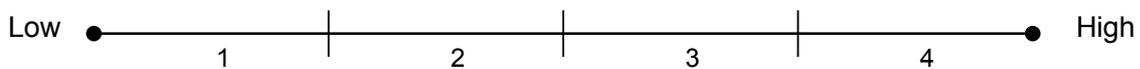
A. We balance participation and open opportunities for others to contribute and respond.



B. We restrain my impulses to respond, react, or rebut at inappropriate times & in ineffective ways.

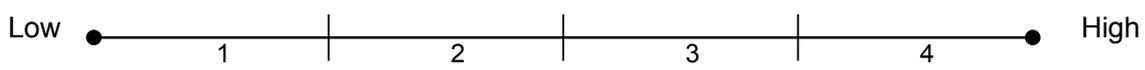


C. We maintain awareness of the group's task, processes, and development.

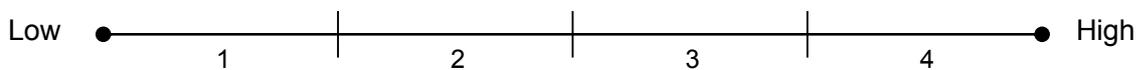


7. Presuming Positive Intentions

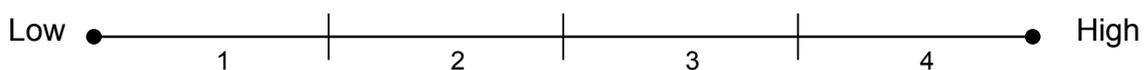
A. We communicate respectfully, whether we agree or disagree.



B. We embed positive presuppositions in our paraphrases, comments, and summaries.



C. We embed positive presuppositions when we inquire or probe for specificity.



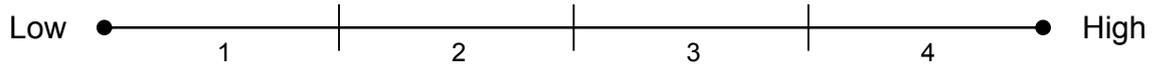


Norms of Collaboration

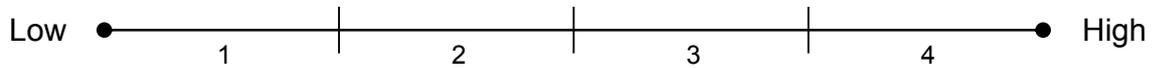
Checking Personal Consistency or Summarizing Personal Ratings

Place a mark on each scale to reflect your perception of your behavior.

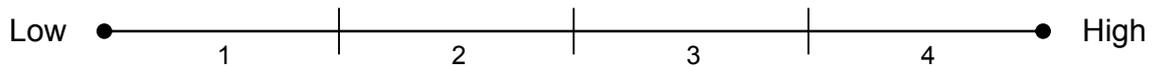
1. Pausing



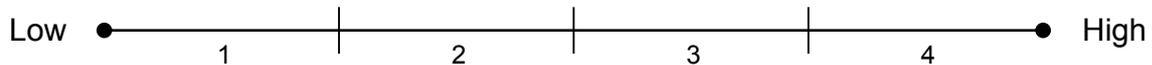
2. Paraphrasing



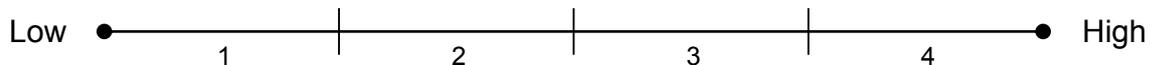
3. Posing Questions



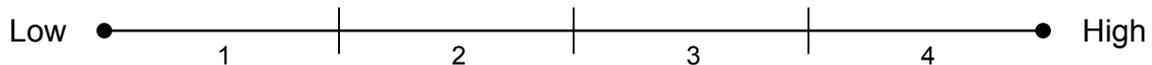
4. Putting Ideas on the Table



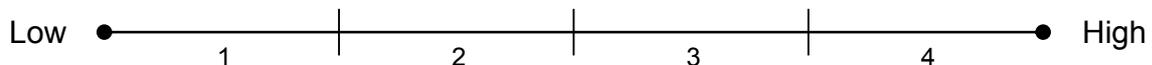
5. Providing Data



6. Paying Attention to Self and Others



7. Presuming Positive Intentions





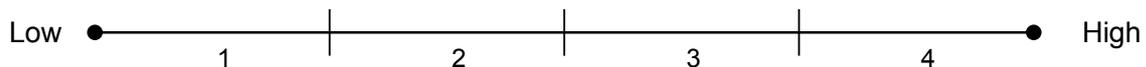
Norms Inventory

Rating the Consistency of Group Member Behavior

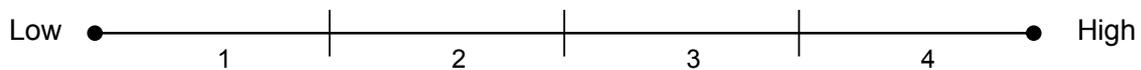
Place a mark on each scale, to reflect your perception of the behavior of group members.

1. Pausing

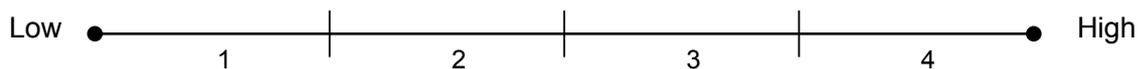
A. We pause after asking questions.



D. We pause after others speak to reflect before responding.

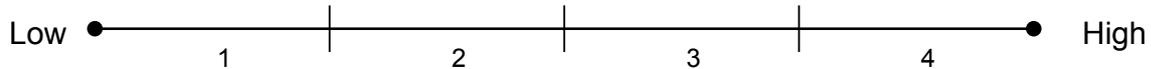


E. We pause before asking questions to permit thoughtful construction.

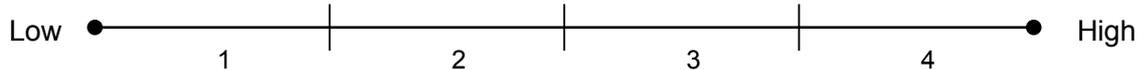


2. Paraphrasing

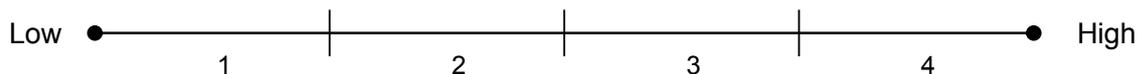
A. We listen and paraphrase to acknowledge thoughts and feelings.



B. We listen and paraphrase to organize thinking and feelings.

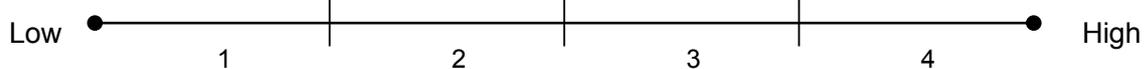


D. We listen and paraphrase to shift levels of abstraction.

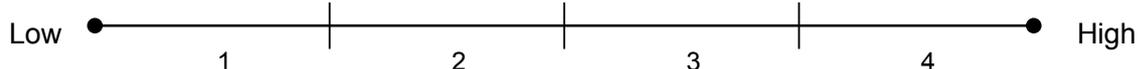


3. Posing Questions

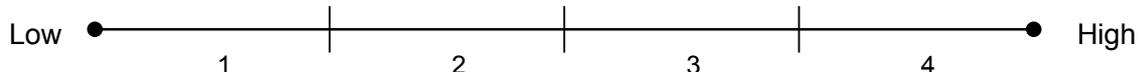
A. We pose questions to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.



B. We inquire before putting ideas on the table or advocating.

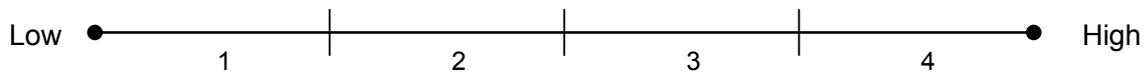


D. We seek specificity of data, assumptions, generalizations, and the meaning of words.

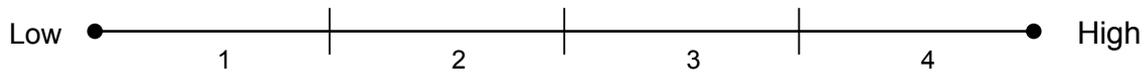


4. Putting Ideas on the Table and Pulling Them Off

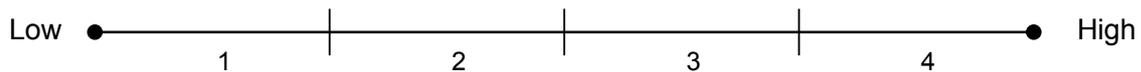
A. We state the intentions of our communications.



B. We provide relevant facts, ideas, opinions, and inferences.

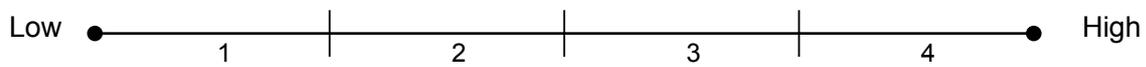


C. We retract or announce modification of previously offered ideas, opinions, and points of view.

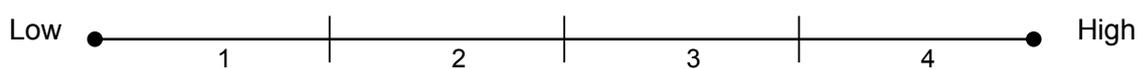


5. Providing Data

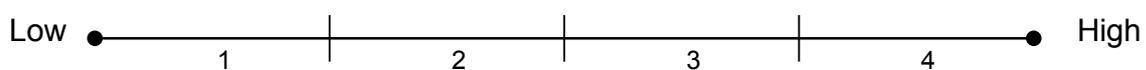
A. We present specific, measurable, observable information.



D. We present data without judgments, opinions, or inferences.

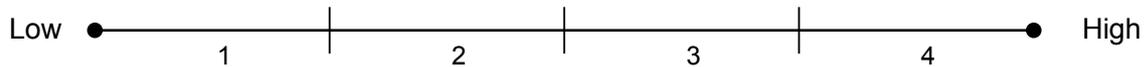


E. We offer multiple types of data to broaden understanding.

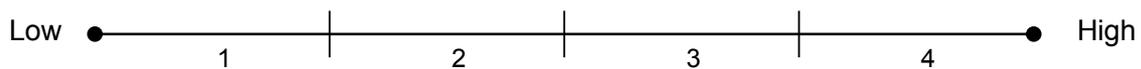


6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

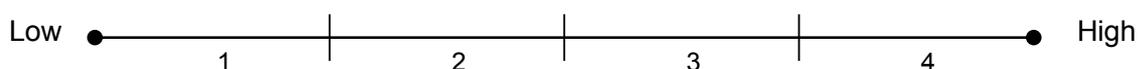
A. We balance participation and open opportunities for others to contribute and respond.



B. We restrain my impulses to respond, react, or rebut at inappropriate times & in ineffective ways.

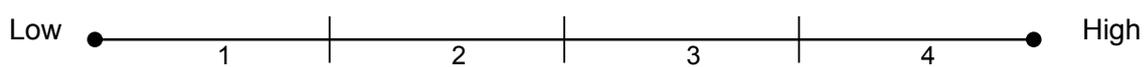


C. We maintain awareness of the group's task, processes, and development.

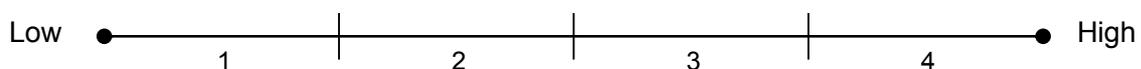


7. Presuming Positive Intentions

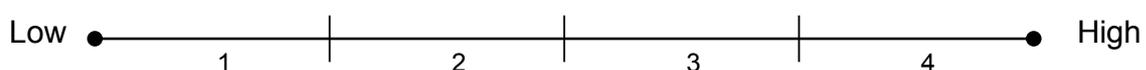
A. We communicate respectfully, whether we agree or disagree.



B. We embed positive presuppositions in our paraphrases, comments, and summaries.



C. We embed positive presuppositions when we inquire or probe for specificity.



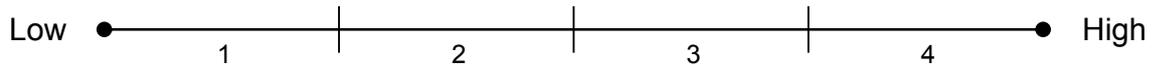


Norms of Collaboration

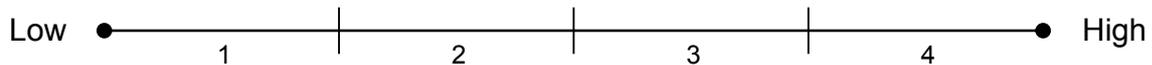
Checking Group Member Consistency or Summarizing Member Ratings

Place a mark on each scale to reflect your perception of group members' behavior.

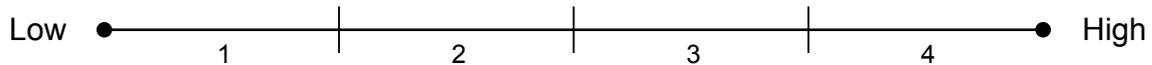
1. Pausing



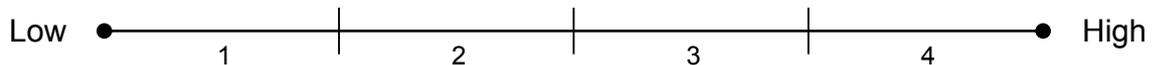
2. Paraphrasing



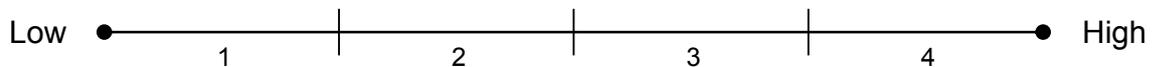
3. Posing Questions



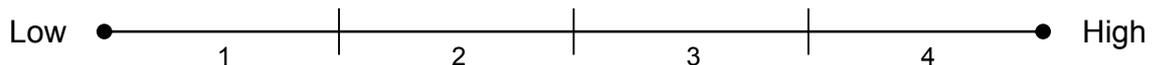
4. Putting Ideas on the Table



5. Providing Data



6. Paying Attention to Self and Others



7. Presuming Positive Intentions

