**LEADERSHP COMMUNICATION**

**ASHA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

**ANDREA FALZARANO:** Welcome to the ASHA Leadership Academy webinar on Leadership Communication. This webinar content is appropriate for entry leaders. I am Andrea Falzarano, Director of Association Governance Operations at the ASHA National Office. We planned this webinar to help Communication Sciences and Disorders professionals to understand that leadership is not restricted to people who supervise employees or hold certain titles, but a series of skills and behaviors that can be learned and developed. Each of you should have a copy of the handout which includes speaker information and slides. If you do not have the handout, please pause the webinar now and access a copy from our website. You will need a copy for interactive sections of this presentation.

At this time I would like to welcome our presenter, Kevin Nourse. Dr. Kevin Norse is an executive coach, organization development consultant, and facilitator with more than 20 years of progressive experience in both for profit and nonprofit organizations. He is a professional certified coach through the International Coach Federation, and has extensive experience coaching leaders in the areas of emotional intelligence, career planning and transition, influence, risk taking, and strategic thinking. Now let’s begin. Over to you Kevin.

**KEVIN NOURSE:** That’s great Andrea, thank you. I wanna extend a welcome to, we’ve got our live studio audience, and of course to those that are listening on the recording. It’s a pleasure to talk about communication, and I’m passionate about this topic. I find that as an executive coach, it often boils down to communication skills that can make or break a leader. Um, and so, today we’re gonna spend a little bit a time looking at it through different lenses, to look at leader communication, and talk about the skills and the impacts that you can have as a good communicator.

So, we’ve got the hand, out, I do wanna just, um… address the ASHA Disclosure Statement. So I am being compensated to record this webinar, um, as a subcontractor, as a, a independent contractor with ASHA, um, and I do not have any, um, nonfinancial interests.

So, let’s do a little bit of an intro here, in terms of setting the foundation for the webinar. We’re gonna focus on three specific objectives today. First is looking at, um, what does it mean to be an effective leader in terms of communication. So we’ll look at some ideas and some skills associated with that. Then I’ll have you take a look at your natural communication style. Because we know that really good communicators, and, and especially leaders that are good communicators, have an awareness of their style, and, the implications in terms of adapting it to other audiences. And then lastly we’ll ex, uh, explore communicating during crisis or adversity or change, and look at, you know, a couple tools associated with, you know, high impact communication, and in that specific context.

So in terms of our agenda, I’m gonna introduce a few key concepts, and we’ll go through each of the different segments, with an activity during each. In order to get the most out of the webinar, um… for those that are listening to the recording, we suggest that you print the guide, the participant guide so that you’ve got it to take notes on. Secondly, be aware of your learning environment. And so I know many of you may not have an office, or, lots of things goin’ on in your workplace. Would be to try to find a quiet environment where you can listen to the recording, and reflect, take notes. Thirdly is, think about stopping the action. So at the various points where we do activities, we would invite you to stop the recording so that you can apply and reflect and capture some notes, and then rejoin us. And you’ll have the opportunity then to hear from folks, the, in the participants in the, in the live audience here in terms of their ex, experiences. And then think about deepening your learning. So my hope is that pu— by the end of the session, you’ll come away with one or two key ideas that you can move into action with as quick as possible. The other possibility is think about who can you teach these concepts to. I find that many times when we know we have to, to teach someone, we learn content differently. So that may be a possibility for you.

Okay. What I try to do or like to do is to really identify core competencies associated with leadership around a specific topic. And, this is kind of, uh, a running list that really do, um, align nicely with our objectives. But I think one of the big things, and we’re gonna emphasize today, is around, um, adjusting your communication style and content to address the needs of diverse stakeholders, be, because we know that one, one size do not, does not fit all when it comes to communication. But again, we’ll be incorporating these throughout the, the session.

So let’s talk about key concepts. I love good quotes, and notables throughout history that have spoken on various topics. And, I actually read the biography for Winston Churchill, but I think he really says it very well. You know, “The difference between mere management and leadership is communication.” And as I alluded to earlier, I find as a coach, so many of the, uh, the sessions I do with clients, actually focuses on their communication skills, and how they become better communicators. ‘Cause you think about it, really, you know, leader, uh, communication is really a core function of leadership. And we often make judgments about leaders effectiveness based on how they communicate. Whether that’s interpersonally, in groups, in larger audience, whether it’s written or spoken. It really doesn’t matter the form or the channel, but it really does stand out in terms of bein’ a hallmark of what it means to be effective leader.

I wanted to go back to a framework, as we think about the distinction between a leader and a manager. Because ultimately, what we’re talking about is leadership communication. So again, when you think about the differences between these different roles, um, we think about from a goal setting perspective, you know, leaders really focus on collaboration. Um, this idea of influence and involving people. Doing the right thing versus doing things right. So it’s really thinking, to some extent we think about kind of ethics and values in leadership. Asking the right questions. I find that leaders often, you know, importantly ask why, versus the how and the what. And then ultimately, a goal of leadership is really building commitment. So as a manager, I might elicit compliance, in essence, I engage your hands, but do I engage your heart? And it’s, you know, often gets back to communication and how the way we communicate can build or destroy commitment. Again, with an emphasis on people and talent, developing culture. And then lastly, I think a big part of motivation is, how do we as leaders communicate in ways that inspire and build and reinforce trust? Because without that, we, we might as well just go home, because we really can’t be very effective in our specific role.

So that really sets us. So I think goin’ back to… to, to the quote, and then we look at really the distinctions between the two, we can then think about, really what goes into good communication. So what I’d like to do is, um, do a little bit of a brainstorm with our, our folks in the live audience today, about, you know, think about yourself, think about really effective leaders that you have worked with or for. And love to hear your ideas about what is it that really skillful leaders who are communicators, what, what is it they do or say that makes them so effective? So again, feel free to type in the chat box, and, let’s hear from the, uh, from our group about what, what you’re experiencing or noticing.

Oh, we’re gettin’ a lot a good perspectives here. Um… Melissa really points out. Gets back to so much of what I just described around honesty and transparency. The trustworthiness. Um, I find that a lot a times when it comes to implementing change, it’s not the change that people have problems with, it’s the fact that they can’t trust leaders who are implementing the change.

Great idea in terms of Jennifer points out about the reflective listening. Um, how well someone listens as a leader is huge, in terms of understanding others. They don’t react quick, quickly as Amanda points out. So the idea of consciously stepping back and asking the question why. So asking good questions, quality of the questions. And Alecia points that out. “They initiate with questions rather than statements, so that kind of natural curiosity and other people’s experiences.

Andrea, I really like what you’ve suggested around summarizing an issue succinctly in terms of checking for understanding. I think the, the source of so much conflict is misunderstanding. And I think that’s such an, a, a great strategy for navigating that.

Puja, I really love what you’re saying about integrity and transparency, telling all the same thing with no double talk, so that that sense that I can, I can be counted on in terms of my messages. Um…yeah, and Amanda reinforces, there’s nothing worse than losing trust due to dishonesty. So we think about what goes into that.

Tralinda, I appreciate this idea of commanding attention in an una, uh, unabrasive way. So you think about leadership presence; it goes hand in hand with how we communicate as leaders. And, you know, do, is the way that we’re communicating inspire trust, or does, does it create a sense of doubt about our ca, capacities as leaders? I think for example, throughout the COVID crisis of the last 18 months, you think about those instances in terms of leaders that inspired you. Many of you were in institutions that were struggling. Or did they, you know, guide you, give you a sense of hope and, and positivity?

Amanda; leading by example. Actions speak volumes. And we’re gonna talk about that Amanda, in terms of, it’s not so much what I say, but it’s how I say it, quite honestly. Um, and Alecia points out, keeping the goals of the group in the form, forefront of all interaction. So kinda like a goal driven communication. Why am I sharing this with you? What end will it support in terms of what we’re tryin’ to achieve here? Yeah.

Um… so anyway, so a really nice summary here in terms of some of the key practices. And I’d like to build upon that. So if you wanna advance in your, um… your participant guide. Some of the work of James O’Toole and Warren Bennis, they wrote a really wonderful article in the *Harvard business Review* years ago and I’ve shared it with a lot a clients. It’s about creating a culture of candor. So the idea, um, and their, their argument that, you know, in essence, we won’t be able to rebuild trust in inti—institutions till leaders learn how to communicate honestly, and create organizations where that’s the norm. You think about how important that is in terms of people’s willingness or, organizational employees willingness to kinda speak truth and power, really, really important part of it. So it’s not just communication, it’s creating cultures that really do support that two-way types of communication. So again, the, the benefits go without saying, but I think they’re really important. The idea of inspiring audiences to take action. To me that’s really part of it. And that maps back directly to what we talked about in terms of leadership. You know, I can command you, or order you to do something, but more importantly, to what extent is my communication inspiring you maybe to take action and move forward around that?

Confidence when presenting your ideas. You know, it, again, we know it when we see it, and we know it when it’s not there. But again, it’s not so much what I say, it’s how I say it, and to what extent do I really bring a sense of leadership presence, that sense of groundedness, so that you, really you’re looking at my body as like the best indicator about what I really think and feel. And then, you know, conveying insights and recommendations from that perspective. So those three key, really key benefits when we think about it.

So let’s talk a little bit about some of the core skills. I mean there are dozens and dozens of, you know, in the literature around you know, what constitutes good leadership communication. And I tried to boil it down to, to 10 of the key ones. So we’ll go through these one at a time. I should say that they’re not necessarily discrete, meaning there are some overlaps, but I think it’s important to distinguish how they do differ. So I’ll be going through these one at a time, and then again, for our audience, our live audience, if you wanna chime in and add to any of these perspectives, we’d love to hear that too.

We start first with active listening. And I think it gets back to Andrea and a couple of others in our group to, today, talked about that. It’s not just talking, but it’s listening. And to me, think about the impact of that. It gets back to, when we talked about what it means to be a leader versus a manager, and how leaders really do inspire trust. Active listening. And I think what’s important, and when I’ve coached people around this, leaders on this, again, the distinction is that I can listen actively to you, make sure you feel understood. It doesn’t necessarily mean I agree with you. And I do know that some of the, my clients have kinda confused the two. But we’re really, we’re, we’re seeking to understand and confirm that, so that’s a really active part of that. So again, bottom line is active lis—listening is such a huge part of creating trust and engagement.

Secondly, adaptive to the needs of a specific audience. So that whole conventional wisdom that one size does not fit all when it comes to communication. So we really think about that. It gets back to, many of you are familiar with emotional intelligence, which is being aware of your own styles, your, your own needs in terms of communication. We often project that upon audiences, is, is that that’s the way they like information, when in fact, that’s not the case. Years ago I taught a class on presentation skills for, to the scientists at the Food and Drug Administration. And one of the things that we did around this was really conducting a bit of a needs assessment. So before you do a presentation, what is it I know about my audience? What’s basically keepin’ them awake at night? How do they like information? What channel do they need it in? and using that to kind of guide how we deliver information. Is really, really an interesting group of people to work with.

Thirdly, we think about nonverbals. Again, I, I mentioned that earlier. And I see this happen a lot, when I evaluate the presentation skills of leaders. So what they’ll do is they’ll communicate key concepts, and yet, their body seems to dissonant with what they’re communicating. It’s the proverbial, yeah, I’m open to your ideas and opinions, and there I’m standing with my arms crossed. Or you come into my office, and I wanna talk to you, but yet, my eyes keep looking at the computer. So again, so often we do that, we don’t realize it. And I think what’s really key there is how do we tap other people in our world, who will let us know that hey, you’re getting in the way of yourself. But typically what happens when there’s a disconnect of words and our bodies, people will look to our bodies as a better indicator of what we’re thinking or feeling. So again, really making sure that we are aligned in terms of our communication.

Clarity on complex topics, in, such as priorities or strategies. There we start to think about how we communicate information. And I think it, you know, and I’ve seen some leaders do really great work around this in terms of say communicating key priorities, the way they kinda format the information, the way they use some a these other techniques such as telling stories, doing process diagrams. But the idea of communicating clearly complex topics, but also building in feedback loops, so that if people are confused, they have a way to kinda surface that back to them so they can clarify it.

Fifthly, we think about, and, empathetic to the emotions and experiences of others. To me that’s so crucial. And again, when we talk about communicating during change and setbacks and adversity, this really is key. And it kinda links with this adaptive approach, which is to what extent we can use our good emotional intelligence skills to detect what is the energy of a group that we’re working with. You know, what, what, basically to what extent are they excited, are they fearful, and that kind a thing, and then how do we adapt our message, based on be able to understand those emotions.

Sixthly, we think about inclusivity, open to dissenting opinions. That concept maps, maps back to the whole culture of candor and how we create an environment where it’s okay to dissent, and raise differences of perspective, and do it in a respectful way. Because ultimately, to me that really leads to kind of better quality solutions. If everybody’s thinking the same, we’re too afraid to think differently. The, and maybe you’ve seen that in teams. We often don’t get very good ideas, because everybody’s so committed to group thing.

Then we think about Number 7, receptivity to feedback. Kinda goes hand in hand with active listening. But I don’t know of a better way to model behavior. If you want your folks to be open say to development and feedback, but you, you yourself are not open to it, it really models the wrong thing. So this idea of not only bein’ receptive to feedback, but eliciting and drawing it out. We know that the higher, um, as leaders evolve, they do this even more. Again, not waiting say for example for an annual performance review, but they willfully go out and ask for it.

Repetition using multiple channels. I spent quite a few years with Price Waterhouse Coopers in the change management practice. And what I found when we designed communication plans, was that we had to find ways to reinforce the message and do in different ways. So it wasn’t just the CEO kind of sending out an email, but it was empowering say middle managers who can reinforce the message, and then frontline staff or supervisors who could reinforce it, using both written, as well as electronic, as well as video, as well as, you know, town halls kind a thing. So, in times of change and transition, people need information multiple times. And really effective leader communicators do this.

And then ninthly we think about stories. There are whole books written these days about the importance of the, the, the ways of telling stories, to, to really communicate core values, or your, kind of your leadership platform. This is, so it’s not just a cognitive connection you’re making with people, but it’s telling stories that have emotional impact. I think about working with a hospital leader who spoke about the impact of say a new treatment protocol in terms of patience, and they, they presented a very compelling story about one specific patient.

And then lastly, visible leadership. Because again, um, again, thinking about… one of my clients is a safety net hospital here in southern California, and we did a lot a work around communicating during COVID, and part of it was rounding, so that the leaders rounded throughout the organizations. Because in the midst of anxiety and fear, and all the things that went through COVID, it was through visible leadership, and literally the leaders rounded so that they could hear firsthand, and see firsthand, what was going on for individuals.

So I’d love to hear any comments, anything that you would add before we move on, about these 10 different skills, and other perspectives around this. Let’s see, Trish points out about feedback, seeking behavior, rather than just waiting for someone to give you feedback is a great skill to develop for, for leaders. So it’s really willfully asking it. And Trish, there’s actually, um, a concept of feet forward, which is, you’re gonna be going into a meeting, and you ask a colleague or your manager, to look for specific behavior. So, I really wanna do good, better today when asking questions of my audience. And you willfully set up the conditions where people will observe you and then give you feedback. ‘Cause people will have feedback, but again, if we don’t ask for it, we’re not gonna get it. That’s great, thank you.

Other perspectives. Um, oh Sally Ann, I like that. Active listening seems so hard for many people. Um… so much interferes with listening, from electronic devices, to wanting to impress others with our own view. So there’s a, there are a lot of barriers to that. We get caught in kind of an emotional reaction that’s really hard to actively listen, when in fact, we’ve gotta kinda self-manage to hear it.

Um… Jennifer, I really appreciate what you’re suggesting around seeking out dissenting opinions is powerful both for leadership and those in the trenches. That’s right. So it really reinforces kinda core values. If we really do value employee engagement, and we really do value transparency, do we willfully seek out kind of people that do think differently from us, and, and, you know, get their voices in the room? I think really important part of it.

Okay, here’s what I’d like to do next. Would be, um, let’s think about this in terms of an activity. I’d like to invite you to think about the, the 10 strategies that, that we just went through. Um, and, which of, which of ‘em, if you were to choose maybe one or two you think you’re really skillful you know, at using. Maybe your flagship communication skills. What are a couple of them? Then secondly I’d like you to think about what are some a your biggest, or what is your biggest leadership challenge? So for example, many of the, the leaders that I work with, you know, they, they are challenged with resistance to change. So they’re tryin’ to maybe change their department, change kind of their team in terms of what they’re doing or whatever, but that, that they’re navigating resistance, and that’s really one a their biggest challenges. So figure out like what is your challenge. And then thirdly think about which of these 10 strategies might really help you overcome that challenge. Because so much of it is you know, communication in ways are gonna help us kind of reach goals and navigate challenges around that.

So let’s just take a moment and see where we, where we go from here. And we’ll start with question 1. Um, let’s see Trisha points out, uh, your strengths, adapting to the needs of specific audiences that you’re addressing. Trisha, I’d love to hear how you practice that. What is it you do to first figure out what the audience needs, and then how do you adapt to it? Um… let’s see. Kim points out a strength for me is becoming visible. Generally love to be part of a team and at the table with decision makers, which I think is really great Kim, in terms of, you know, how we get kind of psychological strokes from doing that, in addition to having greater impact, and bein’ visible. ‘Cause I think that’s really a part of leadership presence, is like being visible, being out there. And Sally Ann, yes, active listening and empathy. They’re kinda like sister skills there. They go really nicely together. Empathy; you know, let me get off of my island and go stand and imagine what you may be experiencing, and actively listen and communicate that. Amanda, I really love that. Again, very consistent with, um, one of the other participants; visible leadership one a your strengths. So you round with your team, and see patients to help when needed. Again, you know, I wish that; ‘cause that’s, often I, I see that in healthcare institutions, and I wish more organizations did that, because there’s nothing as powerful as visible leadership and those kind of ad hoc com, communications that happen in hallways and standing up and engaging. Um, Andrea, I love that; the whole strength of telling stories to en, enhance impact. Um… you know, to make it real, to make it concrete, and also connect with your audience.

So let me ask you all this. Let’s jump to question 3. When you think about… again the challenges that you’re currently facing as a leader, you know, a major challenge, what do you think would be, um, a couple strategies that you might use to, uh, maybe navigate that challenge or, or work around it? Um, again, thinking back to this idea of kind of navigating resistance. What I’ve seen used pretty effectively is the idea of adapting to communication about change, based on the, the needs of the audience, becomes really, really critical. The idea of also being incen—uh, inclusive and open to dissenting opinions is huge in terms of implementing change. Because people are watching the dissenters. And if the dissenters get shut down, that kinda confirms you know, this is a low trust environment.

So let’s go back to our, our group and see what, some of the things that we found here in the audience. Alecia points out that I find, uh, I approach dissenting opinions from a manager perspective versus a leader, and need to be more conscious of incorporating those dissenting opinions to lead to growth for the group. Yeah, Alecia, that’s a great, uh… I mean that’s great that you have that level of awareness. I find that with regard to dissenting opinions, many times those individuals speak for multiple people. In other words, you know, I think about people’s fear of speaking truth to power. That oftentimes you’ve got those brave souls that will speak it. So I think to address the needs of one will address the needs of many, and people will draw conclusions about that.

Let’s see, what else do we have? Um… we’ve got, uh, Amanda shares that, um, bringin’ in more empathy, especially around people solutions that aren’t aligned with your own thought. Takin’ the time to understand other’s opinions and imagine myself if the ti, the tables were turned. Yeah it’s a, it’s that, to me, that’s the essence of empathy. Let me, let me go stand on your island and imagine what, what you may be experiencing around that. So that’s a really great observation Amanda, thank you. And then Melissa, um, really points out about active listening, and truly listening to dissenting opinions. Finding the pi, the piece of information to improve you know, the, the organization, the company.

Okay. So, some really great observations. Um, let’s see. Oh, I think this, this is a really good one here. “As an L, SLP, I’m used to communicating with people with communication impairment, so I repeat and restate myself far too much, which distracts from the core message.” So isn’t that interesting Alecia. So it’s an adaptive response to say your patients, but that same approach, I wonder, you know, how others might perceive it. Again, it’s not your intent, but many times our intent is not our impact. So to have that level of awareness about vocal patterns, is really critical.

Real quick as an anecdote. For years I went to a, um, oh gosh, it was a… Toastmasters group, and practiced kind of public speaking and also extemporaneous speaking. And, you know, the one thing I realized was how much I was using audible pauses. And if you think about it, when we see speakers that use a, you know, an audible pause like an um or an and, is not a big deal, but if your, your presentation or speech is filled with it, people tend to doubt that you have confidence. So the technique that the, the group used was, every time I used an audible pause, they shook a can of pennies. So it was like shock therapy, that to raise the level of awareness things I were, I was doing unconsciously. And I think that’s true for all of us as it relates to building our communication skills, is, we’ve gotta start first with understanding how do people see us now, and those patterns that get in our way.

Okay, great. So, just to tie this together then, we’ve looked at 10 core communication skills. There are some overlaps. Really important in terms of leadership effectiveness.

So at this point let’s, um, let’s advance to the next segment, and talk about communication styles. So going back to the core competencies as we refer to. The idea is that really effective leader communicators know their style and they adapt to the needs of other styles. That one size does not fit all. So when we’re talkin’ about a communication style, it’s really a pattern, a behavior. Like your preferences for how you like to share or receive information.

So, I wanna present a kind of a framework for making sense of, of different styles. So we can think about, um… how, for example leaders make decisions. And we’ve got two ways of thinkin’ about that. We’ve got more analytically oriented leaders. And often their communication focuses on results and impact, a task. We’ve got those that maybe are more empathetic as leaders. Their communication really focuses on people’s needs and values, interactions, and culture. We can then think about another dynamic, which is how people process information. So we’ve got conceptual leaders who prefer a more holistic view of issues. They see how all the dots are connected, versus more pragmatic leaders who are more grounded in terms of what is happening right now. And they tend to see the detailed datapoints. So again, from a decision making perspective, and from an information processing, we combine those to come up with four different communication styles. So let me introduce those.

So let’s start first in this upper lefthand. We’ve got what I call the analytical pragmatist. Again, folks that have that preference tend to prefer very linear data information. Step by step. They want detail, um, relevant to the specific situation at hand. Very logical, very factual. So accuracy’s gonna be really important in terms of communication with individuals with this preference. And their overarching focus is often around results and efficiency.

And I should just say as I go through these, start thinkin’ about where you kind of like, like to live, you know, ‘cause we all have a primary preference.

Then let’s go down to the, the green box, to the empathizers. These are folks that also like the detail, but they’re more attuned to kinda the personal stories, the personal side of it, and the practical application of it. Um… often about addressing the needs of others in an immediate kinda practical way. So with their focus on people in harmony, they like to receive the information from that perspective. I think about this, for example, working in healthcare. Many of the nurses that I’ve worked with come from a kind of a pragmatist, empathizer perspective. And so the, the, the way that you know, we communicate with ‘em really needs to address that.

Let’s go to the upper righthand corner. We’ve got our analytical, conceptual folks. Those are the leaders that really do wanna see the framework and the rationale behind the ideas. Again, they’re lookin’ at it from a big picture perspective. Um, they’re really attuned to competency and the, the source and the credibility of information. And for these individuals, clear direct communication is, is essential. Really value a sense of independence and competence. But again, I think it’s really key to basically paint a long time, term picture. So it, you know, it’s like, they’ll be communicating a long term strategy associated with where we’re going. They’re not gonna be too attuned to the details; that’s someone else’s job.

Then we look at the empathizer conceptual. Again, looking at long term possibilities, especially for people. So we’ve gotta be able to communicate here’s where we’re going, and here’s how were gonna bring people along. Here’s how the culture’s gonna look, things like that. Here’s how we’re gonna incorporate our values. So with the individuals in that lower right corner, we would think about using metaphors, symbols, and other maybe more abstract language, because of their focus in terms of people, values, and potential.

Okay. So again, bottom line is that really everybody kinda orients to one of these quadrants. You might think about… those that may be for example familiar with the Meyers Brigg. The pragmatist analytical would be a sensing thinker. The empathizer pragmatist would be a, um… a, a sensing feeler. Conceptual analytical would be a, an a, uh, intuitive thinker. And the bottom right would be kind of the conceptual empathizer would be a, intuitive feeler. So just to map it back to something you may be familiar with.

Okay. So let’s take a chance, uh, a minute and think about this. So’s, I’ve got some questions to guide us. Specifically, think about, of the four, what is your preferred style. And then situations where you think the style really, you know, using that style is really, really effective. And then, what might be some a the limitations of your preferred style? How does that get you in trouble as a leader? And then, is there anything you need to do to like adapt your preferred style to fit other audiences to have great impact?

So, let’s get a sense of maybe questions 1 and 2. What’s your preferred style, and when do you find that style to be most effective? Let’s get some, some perspectives no that. So I’m, um, you know, kind of the conceptual feeler. And so, you know, when I’m doing say, a leadership program, or I’m communicating a, a leadership development strategy, I find that I can easily present a big picture perspective in it. I’ve got a colleague who I co-facilitate with, who’s much more of a detail person and can augment my style. So it’s really finding a way to kinda partner with others around that. Um… let’s see, Trish points out as the pragmatist empathizer, great for on the ground leadership of day, you know, basically day to day situations. Absolutely, yeah. Let’s see. Alecia, you fall into the pragmas—pragmatist area, but vary between analytical and empathetic, depending on the situation, which I think is a great place to be Alecia, in terms of, adaptive communication. You can kinda cross the bridge between the two. Let’s see, what else do we have? Um… Kim points out, when we’re tryin’ to come up with creative solutions, I think it’s helpful, but it may be difficult to show empathy in a way that considers everyone’s perspective. So again, those that maybe have a little bit more pragmatist, may be not as skilled in terms of the empathy side, but it’s a skill to develop, yeah. And Melissa points out the whole conceptual empathizer, helping to understand others, coming up with solutions. Very much so, when we think about how we can solve those problems. Great.

So let’s jump to question 4. Um… when you think about adapting your communication style, to have greater impact maybe with others that differ. What do you think needs to, to shift in terms of, you know, to transcend your comfort zone, say as it relates to communication? What do you think you would need to do a little bit different there? Well Melissa, that’s right, “To shift between categories depending on the group I’m with.” Again, this framework maybe give you, may give you a useful way, as you go into a meeting or situation, to try to anticipate what are the kinds of people I’m going in with. And it may be that you’re in a meeting that has all kinds of people, which means, you need to speak to the details and high level conceptual issues. Or, you know, the facts and the data as well as the people implications of it. Yeah. And Amanda points out, you know, the idea of increasing your empathy through asking more questions. Right? yeah. Yeah, Puja, to have this, this quadrant in front of you, or as you’re about to go into a meeting, right? Empathizer pragmatist, Andrea. Um, have to be careful to read the audience, so as not to talk too basic and detailed to, um, possibly offend. Right. So Andrea, that really speaks to something we’re not gonna talk a lot about, but I do know that… you know, really skillful leaders that communicate, they’re able to kind of read their audience in terms of, and, is what I’m doing shutting down the audience or opening them up. Because people will kinda like start to shut down if in fact my communication maybe is not the right style associated with it. Um, Alecia, I love what you’re, you’re suggesting here. Um… ask others what has worked in the past. Presenting to a longstanding board, you know, stories get them, but data flies by them. Then use that knowledge and experience of others. I, that’s a great way to do it. It’s, it’s not about reinventing the wheel. You know, this is a longstanding group, and how do you adapt the message. And start to pay attention to the culture of a group around that.

Okay, so, some really nice, um… perspectives in terms of communication style. Again, the key is to think about how can you adapt based on different audiences, that… You know, the other part of it that I didn’t mention is also, letting people know your preferred style of communicating. In other words, don’t keep it hidden in the dark. You know, to let your people know if you wanna come to me, I need to be able to see kind of a larger strategy versus the detail. So I think part a this goes hand in hand with like letting people know expectations about how to have the greatest impact with you as a communicator, and what style you come from, and what’s gonna kinda answer your questions. Okay. So, let’s continue.

Um… our next segment really is about this idea of communicating during change and adversity. And again, I, I thought the topic was so apt, because again, we’re still in the midst of COVID, and, and many of you are still in organizations that are struggling with that. But really, it’s part of an overall strategy. I found that… in having been a, a change management consultant, when I think about what goes into change, it’s, it’s a lot. It’s, you know, building organizational alignment is really critical. Are we ready to change, and how can I assess readiness for change? Training and support. You know, one of the scary parts of change for most people is the fact that you’re taking me from a place where I felt competent, to a place where I might feel incompetent. And, so by offering training and support, we can make sure people feel assured we’re not gonna leave you dangling here. But communication I think is really the key part of it, throughout all phases of change or adversity. So oftentimes change is typically perceived as really negative by organizational and employees. And really as part of like a change management strategy, we’ve gotta consider that. Especially as it relates to kind of how people cope emotionally with, with change and, and stress. Um, and by taking that into account, we can adapt a message, and have greater impact.

So let’s talk a little, a little bit more detail about that. So, when we think about when people experience change or trauma or loss, again, if you think about… what you all have gone through, maybe you certainly have experienced this. Again, we go through defined stages, kinda mirroring the Elizabeth Kubler Ross’s seminal work of, of many years ago. We go through this place of, of loss, which is, we’re startin’ to, to really feel doubtful. In many cases we may feel paralysis and resistance. It’s almost like our body is reacting to this change by shutting down. You might see the fight, flight, or freeze behavior associated with loss and doubt. But hopefully that won’t continue. Because if we get the right information and the right support, we may then move into stage two. And typically in stage two, we think about discovery and exploration. We’re moving from maybe anxiety, um, and resistance, to anticipation. And I should just point out, Sally Ann, your suggestion, or observation that change can represent a loss of control totally nails it. I think that’s so accurate. The other part of this is that uncertainty sends people over the edge in terms of experiencing these stages of cope, uh, of loss and coping.

So stage three, which is the last stage. Again, if we continue to get support, we are able to kinda try on the change, we’re able to kinda get, you know, visible leadership engagement, we start to move to integration and acceptance, which then helps us feel more confident, focused and productive. So again, it’s a, it’s a general process that we go through. Whether it’s planned change, or if you think about, um… I don’t know, any observations you all, as you think about the last 15 to 18 months? Did you see this, these stages in place in terms of how collective your folks in your organization coped with COVID? Any anecdotes or observations from that, from that journey so far?

I know for me it, I work both with retail, healthcare, pharma; it didn’t matter the, the industry or the sector that, there, there were so many different experiences of grief and loss, depending on kinda like the individual, the, the department you were in the same organization. Trish points out, you know, that, not addressing loss, stages of coping should be explicitly addressed by leaders at the time. And returning from COVID lockdowns. Well that’s a great point. You know, people are coming back, say to the workplace, and it’s evoking all sorts of strong emotions, which is, it was hard enough to leave the workplace, now we’ve gotta come back and try to work with each other. And as Trish, you point out so astutely, is that many leaders jump over looking at stages of coping and move right into making changes. Like, alright, let’s get on with it, you know? As if we kinda go into command and control mode and tell people what to do, when in fact they’re still goin’ through a lot of this, these cycles. Um… Alecia, thank you, that’s, we had to rapid cycle through these stages, and I think contributed to the exhaustion we’re all feeling. We do that rapid cycling repeatedly. Boy, that’s so true. It really does have a physical toll. Um… oh that’s great Sally Ann. So your institution did a good job of recognizing the stages of coping, and… frequent meetings to talk a, about the experiences, which I think is great. It speaks to what many organizations do around rounding, and having these informal conversations where we can let people just vent and talk about what they’re experiencing. Um… Amanda points out “COVID changed our hospital permanently. We’ve been working on site the whole time. We’ve had to improvise and integrate before the loss. It’s almost that we’re there now, and it’s been reversed.” Yeah. So it’s kinda the cyclical nature of the, Amanda, that you point out.

One thing I wanted to point out, at the bottom of the, the slide here, when we think about stages of coping, what I often see, especially in plan change, or even, you know, dealing with, you know, trauma and loss, is that, you know, a lot of leaders that maybe aren’t aware of this process can kinda misfire. So take a look at that graphic. And so you see on the left side, the axis is reaction to change. So at the top would represent really productive, effective reactions. We’re, we’re consciously coping with it. And toward the bottom would be really strong, ‘kay, fight or flight, really negative reactions. And then the other axis is over time.

So here we start with senior leaders. So, they’ve got their stuff too, their emotional baggage. They work through the change. They bottom out, and they come bouncing out of it. Then we have middle managers. The, so the change drops down to the middle level. They start to, to decline. So look at point Number 1. Here’s what, what we see happening. On the way, lead—senior leaders are on the way up. So they’re starting to talk about the, the vision and where we’re goin’ in the future, and how good this change is, and we’re gonna get through it. When in fact, middle managers are no the way down. They’re goin’ through the loss and doubt. And what happens is that when there’s that mismatch, middle managers aren’t hearing what they need to hear, so senior leaders are speakin’ a different language. And, and, you know, so the cycle continues. Now middle managers bottom out. They start on the way up, and staff are startin’ to struggle with it. So you can see how this really, this mismatch of kind of what leaders communicate and where, you know, their followers are can create this real disconnect. And basically what it does, it delays kind of this coping process. It gets in the way of it, blocks it.

Let me just stop and pause and ask folks in our classroom, do you see, have you seen this dynamic happen, wh, in your institution, especially over the last 15 to 18 months, where senior leaders were communicating at a level that really wasn’t attending to the needs of maybe lower level staff, or even you? Kim points out a hundred percent, yeah. Yeah, Amanda, I think it really brings it together in terms of again, what’s happening. Oh, Alecia, “I’ve done it as a leader, and now I owe my staff apology.” Well, you know, better late than never. And I think there’s, you know, to, to, to bring a sense a humility, like now that I know what I know, (Laugh) I would of done it differently. And I think that goes a long way toward building, you know, credibility and legitimacy with folks, which is, I’m human too. Yeah. That’s part of it. And Trish points out she sees it. The, the cycling of these stages too, yeah.

So again, this really gets back to, when you think about at the beginning of our, our webinar, we talked a lot about the different strategies associated with effective communication for leaders. So, to, to shake up the cycle, it gets back to this idea of how do we know what the emotions and the, the feelings of our followers are when we go to communicate. This idea of adapting to the specific needs of the audience is really critical. Even telling stories how that can help people get through that change cycle around it, yeah. Okay. Well let’s continue.

One strategy I wanted to share with you all, ‘cause this might be a really practical way to move into action about communicating. I use the work of William Bridges. Bill Bridges wrote a book called *Managing Transitions*. It’s a really excellent book for anybody interested in looking it. It’s not about necessarily a change. Change is external, but transitions are the emotional processes we go internally. So he talked about how do you help people through transitions. And this is one strategy we often used when I was in the change management practice at Price Waterhouse Coopers. What we did was to eliminate some a the uncertainty, we did, we communicated, and I had leaders think this through, what is gonna stop happening as a result of this change, what’s gonna start happening, and what will continue. In essence, what are the fears that people often have during change, and even the adversity that we face? Is like, I don’t know where we’re going with this. Well, if you can assure them that, yeah, some things will come to an end; we’re gonna start dong some new things, hopefully really positive things. But that there are some things that are constant, and we won’t change. So when it goes then, you can use this tool as you think about say any change maybe you’re contemplating in your department or your team or larger organization. Could even be used in a volunteer capacity. But to sit down and really think about what’s gonna happen as a result of the change that we’re thinking about, or this, this progress that we’re tryin’ to make. What literally, what behaviors or practices will we stop doing? So here’s an example. We wanna, um, this organization was tryin’ to move to a more collaborative culture. And so they were gonna stop this idea of developing strategies without consulting your colleagues. So they were struggling with the silo mentality. So that’s gotta stop. We, we can’t operate in a vacuum anymore. Or, stop approaching managers with problems, and start approaching managers with solutions and ideas, because they really wanted to move to more of an empowerment model. And a couple things that were gonna continue. They were gonna keep doing their departmental meetings with status updates. They were gonna keep doin’ the holiday party and company picnic. Even though that seems kind of inconsequential, it’s really assuring to people to know that there are some things in this organization that will not change our commitment to these things. We’re still gonna do the employee awards, we’re still gonna give a preference for internal candidates versus external. We’ll still do our annual employment and engagement survey. But yeah, we’re gonna start looking at bonuses based on both team and divisional performance, as well as individual performance, because we wanna incent collaboration. We’re gonna include peer feedback in the performance evaluation process, because, you know, no man or no woman is an island, and we wanna get people feedback about how well they are collaborating. So this is a useful tool again to, to base your communication. So if you can start to communicate to people about what’s gonna stop, start, or continue, you can help them get on board with the change, minimize their fears of the unce— the uncertainty, or the ambiguity, and help them get on board.

So with that in mind, I’d like to jump right to Number 2. Think about a current change effort in your organization or your team. And then think about maybe, uh, a couple things in each column. What is a behavior or practice that needs to stop or will stop to successfully implement the change? What is something that you’re gonna start doing in this new environment, and is there anything, maybe one or two things that will continue? So let me give you just a, a moment to think about that, um, and then we’ll just brainstorm some responses.

So, let’s start with the stop. As you think about… if you can type in the chat box, based on the changes you’re tryin’ to implement, what are examples of the kinds of practices or behaviors that might stop with your change effort? Once again, we’d love to see you type that in the chat box and see what we’ve got.

Oh I see Alecia adding more without taking anything away. Right? Instead of piling on. And Kim, I love that; “Long drawn out discussions about things that ae inconsequential.” Yeah, we’ve gotta stop that because it’s, it’s wasting people’s time. “Handling most communication via email.” Trish, that’s really powerful. Imagine that? We actually talk to each other? “Meeting agendas that are not adhered to.” We have to stop that. You think about how much time is wasted in meetings. (Laugh) From poorly designed meetings, right? What are examples of, um, again, with your specific change effort, behaviors that you would start doing or practices? What’s gonna start that’s gonna really enable the change? What ideas do you have there? (Pause) So behaviors that you can start, or that will actually help implement the change. You’re gonna start doing these. Having frontline staff focus groups to get feedback. So we’re gonna start giving more of a voice to frontline staff Amanda. A consent style approach. Letting people control what comes their way, and what they don’t have capacity for. Yeah, if we’re gonna engage people, we have to give them some sense of choice around that. Start, as Sally Ann provo, uh, suggests, providing more options for higher education, having asynchronous options for learning. Um, “Aligning our efforts to our strategic plan and goals.” Kim, that’s really powerful. You think about how many strategic plans go on the bookshelf on, you know, on the, on the shelf, never to be seen the light of day. But we’re actually gonna start looking at our behavior and how that aligns with it. How ‘bout the last column, the last idea? When you think about the change you’re thinking about implementing, what would continue? It’s not gonna change. It worked for us before, and we’re gonna continue it. What are some examples about the, those behaviors? Oh, Alecia I love that; “Connecting as people before engaging in our professional tasks at hand.” Right? You know, that’s that kinda human side of it. And Amanda, “Monthly rounding. You know it worked for us through COVID, we’re gonna continue it.” Coming together as a department every other week. Love that. And Sally Ann, where you, uh, suggest being concerned for students’ wellbeing and, alert for struggles that interfere with their learning. And you, again, it’s this, it’s a, it’s like a patient or student centric culture. We’re not gonna lose that. And I think that really gives people a sense of assurance, because again, the, the thing that I think, uh, the, the technical term is freaks people out during change and trauma and adversity, is the uncertainty. If you think about your experience through COVID, it’s like what are we doing, where are we going with this? What’s ahead for us? Yeah.

Okay, well we’ve got just a few minutes. So I thought I would tie it together, and then to point out a couple of the supplemental resources before I toss it back to Andrea.

So, just a couple of, of key concepts. Again, we talked about, um… what is it that goes into, you know, really effective leader behavior? Remember, we distinguish between management and leadership, and they really are distinct ways of communicating. Well, we, we explored some of the critical behaviors that you can use to really step into your leadership you know, mindset. Um… our natural communication style may or may not address the needs of followers. But with kind of heterogenous audiences, we maybe need to use a variety of different approaches, whether it’s conceptual or detail, people centric or task centric, and address those needs. Thirdly, we looked at the, the models in terms of change cycles that people go through. And that skillful leaders really recognize and, and they try to discern the emotional states of their followers, and then find strategies that can help move them through that, really align the way leaders communicate with what the needs of their, their rec—direct reports. And really, the bottom line is that uncertainty’s such a major stressor for people in change. So the key really becomes how do we minimize uncertainty, and the strategy we use with some stop/start/continue framework, which might really help you all in terms of communication.

So I should just point out that we do have some additional resources, including the Bridges work I mentioned. HBR has a really good one on communication. And then, the *Culture of Candor* article that I referenced there.

So with that, just got a few minutes left, so I’ll toss back to my colleague, uh, Andrea Falzarano, to, to wrap things up.

**ANDREA FALZARANO:** Thank you Kevin. And thank you everyone for joining us. This webinar is part of a series in ASHA’s Leadership Academy. For more information, including information on continuing education credits, visit [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org), and search Leadership Academy. We also encourage you to join the ASHA community focused on leadership topics. Go to asha.org, and search Leadership Academy. You will find a link to the online community on this page. This concludes the ASHA leadership Academy Webinar, Leadership Communication. Goodbye from the ASHA National Office.