

## Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to recognize different communication patterns involving pacing. They will also reflect on how differences in pacing are perceived and how they might interact with individuals who use different patterns from them. In this activity, participants will first learn three different ways that people pace their communication. Students will view a clip from the TV sitcom *The Middle* and discuss the communications styles. Then, they will role play using these patterns and discuss how they managed these various roles.

## Background and Information:

This activity was created by Donna M. Stringer and Patricia A. Cassidy and is available in their book, *52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences* (see citation below). For this lesson plan, it was adapted by Annette Benson (CILMAR - see directions on the following page) and Ellen Schellhase (Purdue College of Pharmacy) further adapted for virtual participation.

**Objectives:** As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. "Identify three primary patterns of communication pacing."
2. "Identify how people using different pacing patterns might perceive one another."
3. Identify effective ways to manage pacing patterns" (Stringer & Cassidy, 2009, p. 111).

**Time:** 30 - 45 minutes

**Group Size:** Small group

## Materials:

Pacing PowerPoint (in [Downloads](#))

If using the book: Pacing Narrative (Attachment on p. 113).

Access to streaming service carrying *The Middle* or a download of the episode/clip.

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences

## Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

**Other Skills:** Friendship, Teamwork

**Activity Instructions:**

1. Use the Pacing PowerPoint in [Downloads](#) to facilitate this activity. For additional tips and guidance, you can also consult Kris Acheson-Clair's "[Introduction to Pacing](#)" video and a [video demonstration of the Pacing activity](#).
2. Use slides 2-7 to explain the concept of pacing and the three types of communication patterns: turn-taking, pausing, and overlapping.
3. Use slide 8 to discuss the stereotypes associated with the different patterns of communication and emphasize the importance of avoiding stereotypes.
4. Use slides 9-11 to get participants to reflect on their own communication pacing styles and how they view others with different styles.
5. Use slides 12 & 13 to utilize the clip from *The Middle* for discussion. The clip can be accessed via several popular streaming subscriptions. This clip from the TV Show *The Middle* Season 7 Episode 15: "Hecks at a Movie" From 6:46 → 8:48

The following are points of discussion:

- *Discuss the pacing styles that you recognize in both versions of conversation in the theater lobby during the clip.* You may see all of the styles in the clip but certainly you see Frankie and Mike Heck point out the style of their spouse.
  - *If you were in the lobby with the Hecks, what pacing style would you have utilized for this conversation?* Ask participants to articulate why they may have chosen the communication style
  - *How did the different pacing styles affect this conversation?* The flashes to the conversation demonstrate the point of view of Mike and Frankie and how they view the style of their spouse.
6. Using Zoom, place the groups into small breakout rooms with three people in each. Prior to assigning breakout rooms provide each participant with a letter corresponding to one of the communication styles (this can be done via email in advance or via individual chat within Zoom once the session has started).
  7. Slides 14-17 contain discussion questions for conversation. Participants should discuss these questions in their groups using the communication style indicated on their slip of paper.  

*Note:* Facilitators can change these discussion questions to fit the context surrounding the activity.
  8. Debrief using the questions on slide 17.

**Related Tools:**

*Similar tools:*

- [Direct-Indirect Communication](#)
- [My Emotional Hot Buttons](#)
- [Communication Pacing in "Among Us"](#)