Introduction:

For better or worse, group dynamics form quickly in team settings and are informed by many factors. Within every diverse team setting, groups have the potential to collaborate effectively and creatively, however, miscommunication and misunderstandings are inevitable. Solutions to issues must be identified and addressed for positive shifts to occur. This activity encourages participants to consider their own communication styles and the styles of others when working on diverse teams and to reflect upon and enact behaviors that contribute to healthier and more inclusive team dynamics.

Facilitator Notes:

This activity can be easily modified to fit a 50-minute class period by assigning Steps 1-3 of this Lesson Plan (outcomes, watching the video, answering questions) as homework prior to the class period. The class would then start with a quick small group sharing of insights, followed by a large group debrief.

It would be beneficial if participants were introduced to the information in Step 5 of this Lesson Plan, e.g., Hammer's (2005) Intercultural Conflict Styles inventory and patterns of communication pacing, before experiencing this activity.

Objectives:

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

1. Identify their own and others' personal communication styles within teams.
2. Demonstrate the ability to shift their communication style appropriately when engaging with others in a team setting.
3. Develop effective strategies to build a more inclusive team environment where all voices are welcomed and heard.

Time:

90 minutes.

Group Size:

Entire Group.

Materials:

Lost in Communication Handout and Slides (both in [Downloads](#)); Computer with access to the internet.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

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.

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.

Openness

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Other Skills:

Teamwork; Mentorship & Leadership; Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

Activity Instructions:

1. Use the PowerPoint in Downloads to facilitate this activity. Begin by introducing the learning objectives.

2. Watch Lost in communication: an intercultural meeting video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfATJkWyd7g&t=17s

3. In small groups, instruct participants to engage in a discussion about the video:

   - What stuck out to you from the video?
   - How did it feel to watch different ways of participating in a team meeting?
   - Which character did you resonate/relate with most?
   - How do you typically share your ideas? Are you first to share, last to share, etc.?
   - What factors influence your willingness to share (history of the group, power dynamics, group size, your culture, your family norms etc.)?
   - What insight did hearing the inner thoughts of each character provide?
   - What team meeting habits/behaviors in others do you find challenging?
   - What team meeting habits/behaviors in yourself do you think others find challenging?
   - Imagine the internal dialogue of someone with a challenging habit/behavior in a team meeting. What do you think they might be thinking/feeling?
   - What does your internal dialogue typically sound like in a challenging team meeting? What are you thinking and feeling in these moments?

4. Debrief with participants as an entire group:

Adapted by Dr. Aparajita Jaiswal, Dr. Tatjana Babic-Williams, and Kelsey Patton, CILMAR, from:
ZHAW Gesundheit. (2022, February 2). Lost in communication: an intercultural meeting [Video].
YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfATJkWyd7g&t=17s
Hammer, M. (2005). Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory. ICS Inventory, LLC. https://icsinventory.com/

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- What are your biggest takeaways from the video and your small group discussion?
- Reflecting upon past team meetings in which you participated, how does this video relate to team dynamics you have experienced?
- Based on your small group discussion, what factors and/or aspects of your culture influence what, how, and when you share your thoughts in a team meeting?

5. Briefly introduce Hammer's (2005) Intercultural Conflict Styles inventory and patterns of communication pacing.

   Ask participants to reflect upon where they would place themselves on the continuums/quadrants and consider other factors/aspects that might inform how they show up in group dynamics/team meetings.

6. Ask participants to fill out the Lost in Communication Handout individually, reflecting to the following questions:

- How would you describe your preferred communication style? How does it change in different group settings?
- What are the strengths of your style (what people appreciate about your style)?
- What can be challenging to you and others about your style?
- Identify what you wish others knew/understood about your style and how you'd like them to engage with it.

7. Ask participants to share their Handout insights and responses in the larger group.

8. Redirect participants back to the video (you are encouraged to re-watch the video). Ask the participants to take notes on the instances of pacing and direct and indirect communication as they watch the video.

9. Ask students to discuss the communication styles and patterns they observed in the video in their small groups.

10. Engage in a discussion posing the following questions to the entire group:

- Where does each character (Elena, Sam, Amanda, Alina, and Susan) from the video fall on the continuums we discussed (emotional restraint/expressiveness, indirectness/directness, patterns of communication pacing etc.)?
- What are the met and unmet needs as well as frustrations of each character?
- What mindset and attitude shifts might be helpful for each character as they engage with one another?
- What behavioral shifts might be helpful for each character as they engage with one another?
- What other strategies can you identify to ensure that the team functions well?

11. Instruct participants to gather in groups of five, with each individual playing the role of a character from the video. Instruct participants to reenact the conversations in their assigned role but modeling the mindset/attitude/behavioral shifts that help engage their character with others.

12. Debrief with participants:

- How did it feel to role play this scenario?

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- What did you notice?
- How easy/difficult was it to shift your communication style?
- Did this activity bring up any real-world applications (either personal or general) for you?
- Did this activity challenge your behavior or thinking in any way? How so?
- How might you apply what you learned through this activity to a future team meeting? What do you want to remember when you encounter challenging team dynamics in the future? What strategies would you use when different communication styles occur in a group conversation?
- What does an inclusive team look like?

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