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Pacing

Time Required:

30 minutes: 10 for pacing lecture, 5 for conversation, 15 for debriefing.

Objectives:

To help participants identify:

1. Three primary patterns of communication pacing.
2. How people using different pacing patterns might perceive one another.
3. Effective ways to manage pacing patterns.

Materials:

Pacing Narrative (Attachment)

Process:

1. Provide information about different pacing patterns using the Pacing Narrative.
2. Place participants in groups of 3. Assign each person in each triad a different pacing pattern and give them 5 minutes to conduct a conversation on any topic relevant to the group.
3. Debrief the experience.

Debriefing Questions:

1. What happened during this conversation?
   a. How did you feel?
   b. What did you do?
2. What specific strategies could you use if different pacing patterns existed in conversations with others?

Debriefing Conclusions:

1. When people are using different pacing patterns they can misperceive one another.

2. Recognizing different pacing patterns can help manage both the conversation and the misperceptions.
3. Verbalizing the different patterns you recognize and asking for an agreement about how the conversation can proceed will create a more effective cross-cultural conversation.

Attachment : Pacing Narrative

There are three basic pacing patterns people use when communicating.

- This first pattern is most often used by detached and more fast-paced communicators. This could also be called "take turns" talking. When we are conversing I listen for the period at the end of your sentence. Visually, it might look like:

Person A	Person B	Person A	Person B

- The second pattern is used by people who are from more reflective or slower-paced communication style cultures. When I hear the period at the end of your sentence, then and only then do I begin reflecting on what you have said and how I want to respond. It would be inconceivable for me to begin preparing a response before you had finished because I don't have all of your information yet. That means there will be a pause between when you finish talking and when I begin talking. If you are using the same pacing pattern, you will be fine with the silence created by my reflection. If, on the other hand, you are using the "take turns" pacing pattern, you might interrupt my silence and respond for me—often thinking you are doing me a favor because I "don't have an answer." This can be perceived as rude by the reflective pacing pattern and can result in the more reflective pattern never being heard. Visually, it might look like:

Person A		Person B		Person A
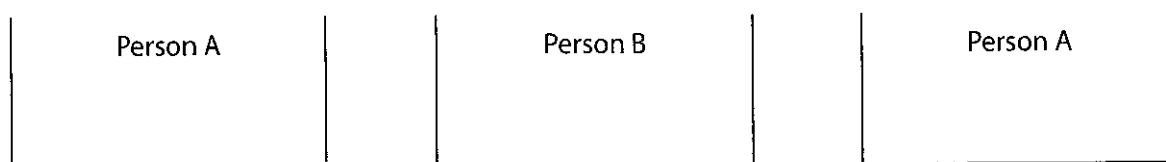
- The third pattern is one more often seen in attached or faster-paced communicators. In this pattern, I jump into the middle of your sentence; you jump into mine, and so on. Sometimes we are both talking simultaneously, leaving those who are using the other two pacing patterns wondering if we ever listen to each other. There are two types of this pattern: interruptive and overlapping. The difference is in the content. If I jump into your sentence and change the subject, become the expert, or take the conversation away from you, it is an interruptive pattern. If, on the other hand, I jump into your sentence to agree, support what you are saying, ask for more information, and don't change the subject, it is likely an overlapping pattern.
Visually, this pattern might look like:

Person A		Person A		Person A
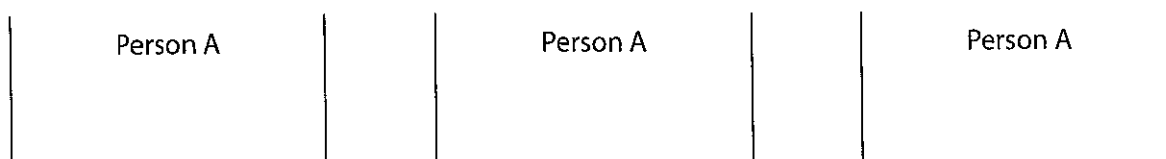
Person B	Person B	Person B

If you tend to use one of the top two patterns, you might find the last one challenging—it is most often felt to be an interruption. If you are able, however, to listen for the content it can be helpful. If you identify someone who is simply overlapping you may be able to allow them to continue doing so—they are, after all, intending to be supportive. If, on the other hand, what they are doing is really interruptive, you may then wish to ask that they wait until you have completed your thoughts before they speak.

The challenge is not with any of these patterns specifically. Rather, the challenge is when two different people are using two different patterns and misperceive each other.