

Building Dynamic Groups



Dolphins and Killer Whales

- Purpose:** To help participants become aware of listening responses that stop communication ("stoppers") and listening responses that encourage communication ("openers").
- Setting:** Room for participants to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Materials:** Newsprint, markers, and masking tape
- Time Required:** 45 minutes
- Procedure:** Write the following types of responses on a small sheet of newsprint (one response per sheet). Do not include the hidden meaning, this is for your information only.

Killer Whales

<u>Verbal Responses</u>	<u>Hidden Meaning</u>
"You must work together..."	Ordering
"You will do your..."	Directing
"You better..."	Warning
"If you don't..."	Threatening
"You ought to..."	Moralizing
"It is your responsibility..."	Preaching
"If I were you..."	Advice-Giving
"Why don't you..."	
"Let me suggest..."	
"You are still too new...inexperienced..."	Judging
"You are bad..."	Belittling

"Why did you...?"	Questioning
"Where did you...?"	Interrogating
"You are a good..."	Praising
"That's a nice thing..."	Evaluating
"You're a spoiled brat..."	Name Calling
"Cry baby..."	Ridiculing
"What you need is..."	Interpreting
"Your problem is..."	Analyzing
"There, there, ... it will be all right"	Reassuring
"That's too bad..."	
"We don't talk about that..."	Withdrawing
	Distracting

Dolphins

Verbal Responses

Hidden Meaning

"In your shoes..."	Empathy
"I think I understand your viewpoint..."	
"That's an interesting point..."	Acceptance
"Yes." "Mmmm hmmm."	
"Let me see if I understand what you're saying..."	Reflective or Active
"Sounds as though you feel cheated..."	Listening
"Tell me more about what happened..."	Door Opener

Introduce participants to the concept that some of our listening responses stop communication and some encourage communication. Suggest that listening responses which stop communication be called "Killer Whales" and that listening responses which encourage communication be called "Dolphins." Tape up sheets of newsprint labeled "Dolphins" and "Killer Whales" on opposite sides of the room.

Distribute the 16 responses randomly among groups of two to four participants and ask them to classify the response as a "Killer Whale" or a "Dolphin."

Processing:

-Have groups read their responses with nonverbal actions (such as vocal tones) to match their "Killer Whale" or "Dolphin" classification and ask for group feedback on the responses.

-Have groups tape their responses on the wall under "Dolphin" or "Killer Whale" classifications and ask for group feedback on the responses. Why is the response a "Dolphin" or a "Killer Whale"? You can use the hidden meaning to aid in this discussion.

-Ask participants to discuss what "Killer Whale" and "Dolphin" responses they are most aware of in their own communication skills.

Reference: Martin, R.R.; Weber, P.L.; Henderson, W. E.; Lafontaine, K. R.; Sachs, R. E.; Roth, J.; Cox, K. J.; Schaffner, D. (1987). Dolphins and killer whales. (Section p.19). [Laser d.i.s.k.](#) Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Extension.