



Teacher Leadership Resource Tool

Three Types of Paraphrases

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Context

These clips from Cognitive CoachingSM conversations with Becky, Elizabeth and Jon show three examples of three different kinds of paraphrases. The tool of paraphrasing captures the essence of someone's thinking. Elizabeth works with teachers as a coach and administrator, while Jon and Becky are Instructional Coaches. All conversations were reflections on their work supporting teachers as leaders and learners, or on their learning process.

Why - Purpose and Intent

A paraphrase provides a safe environment that allows the brain to engage in cognition, or problem solving. When there is emotional safety, the pathways in the brain are clear. Neurotransmitters to the neo-cortex allow neurons to communicate more effectively through these pathways. However, when the brain senses threat, signals to the neo-cortex interfere with thinking, so a person may not have clarity of thought, or rational decision-making. The paraphrase offers this cognitive and affective safety for the brain to think. So, a question, for example, that is offered without a paraphrase may shut the brain off to thinking because it senses threat.

How – Thinking process that led to development of tool

It is important to me that I provide someone the most optimal thinking environment. Offering different kinds of paraphrases allows for multiple ways to reflect, organize or label someone's thinking. These four clips from Cognitive CoachingSM conversations show four different ways to capture someone's thinking. In listening to someone as he/she is talking, it is important to pay attention to language and highlight key ideas. Here are four ways to capture the essence of a person's thinking:

- Paraphrase for acknowledgment and clarification
- Paraphrase to summarize and organize a person's thinking
- Paraphrase to “shift level of abstraction” – shifting the thinking to a more **abstract** label
- Paraphrase to “shift level of abstraction” –shifting thinking down to a more **concrete** label

What – Using coaching tool of paraphrasing

The Cognitive CoachingSM conversation video clips show models of three kinds of paraphrases that are used to support an individual's thinking. The three paraphrases

with examples from clips are (underlined words indicate key language constructs that highlight the particular paraphrase):

1. **Acknowledge and clarify paraphrase** - *“You’re wondering how you might pose this to the group...how might you find an area to focus on.”*
2. **Summarize and organize paraphrase** - *–“You’d like to see that they follow... through on some commitments and that they spend some time reflecting at the end of the year.”*
3. **Shift level of abstraction paraphrase** - Example from clip that shifts thinking up to a more abstract level, *“You’re saying that this may influence your work...from a micro lens perspective and a macro lens perspective.”* The example in the clip that shifts the thinking down to a more concrete label, *“An example that you are pointing to is the attention your colleagues gave you”* or *“...this is not about blazing through the agenda to get to the end of the meeting”*

Reflection

Videotaping these conversations and then scripting and labeling each paraphrase by its type, provided me with a powerful learning opportunity. Anytime I analyze how I work with individuals, I find that I discover something new. As a learner, I know I will not grow in my work without this videotaping analysis and reflection process.