

**Blue Shield of California Foundation Blue Shield Against Violence
Strong Field Project to End Domestic Violence
Regional Institute, Effective & Strategic Communication**

Exercise on communicating difficult information to ambivalent listeners

Think of someone to whom you need to take action about some aspect of your work. This may be a policymaker, a cleric, a community member, a client, or a donor. This person is not hostile to your work; they may, however, be ambivalent about the need to address and prevent domestic violence, for example. Why, specifically, might this person be ambivalent? What motivates him or her to resist the action you wish them to take?

Choose a colleague with whom you have not yet partnered in an exercise. Describe this person to your new partner, and the specific reasons why you believe they oppose the change for which you are advocating.

Your partner will now role-play this person who opposes you. You must engage your opponent and encourage them to change. Your partner will respond as your “opponent”. Spend 3 minutes in conversation with your “opponent”.

Now, switch. Your partner will ask you to play someone in opposition to the change for which they are advocating. Spend 3 minutes in conversation with your partner, role-playing their opponent.

Now, spend 4 minutes discussing both role-plays: What worked? Was there anything you expected to hear but did not hear? Was there anything you wished you had heard? What did your partner’s comments make you think about? Does this memory help or hurt your understanding of the issue?

[The goal of this exercise is to practice speaking about the more difficult aspects of your work, and to show how, when you look at a situation differently, your approaches may change. It encourages strategic communications planning: to whom are you speaking; what do you want them to do; how must they feel and what must they know to take your desired action; what can you share with them to move them toward action?]

