Communication:
The art of consultation

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What is a consultation?
Consultation

What do ideal peer consultants do?
Features of an Ideal Peer Consultation

- Create a welcoming atmosphere
  - be inclusive
  - don’t be judgemental

- Actively listen

- Ask questions to clarify the question

- Pinpoint the issue

- Present options

- Allow students to come up with a decision
Active Listening

As a peer leader, what can you do to show that you are actively listening?
Active Listening

- Paraphrase key points
- Ask open ended questions
- Frame questions in a positive, non-threatening manner
- Maintain eye contact
- Body Language
Body Language

➢ Smile
➢ Lean in slightly
➢ Remove barriers
➢ Sit up straight without slouching
➢ Eye contact
➢ No fidgeting
➢ Affirmative actions
• As peer leaders seek to support the development of their mentees, the following sequence of question can serve as a useful guide:

  What?

  So what?

  Now what?

• By applying these questions, the emphasis is placed on prompting students to actively guide their own processes of discovery
1. What?
Clarify the Question

Sometimes the question is not clear.

Examples:

➢ I don’t understand this student’s accent
➢ The question is confusing or too big
  ➢ I missed class will you please teach me everything?
2. So what?
Negotiate Boundaries

➢ As a peer consultant, what kind of questions do you expect to answer in a consultation?

➢ Do you have to answer every question?
2. So what? Present Options

➢ Refer to the Resources Module
  (Familiarize yourself with all resources available on campus!)

➢ If you refer to your personal experiences, put a disclaimer forward and offer a lot of detail as to why your experience was the way it was

➢ Provide multiple options

➢ How would you like to feel when you walk away from a consultation?

➢ How do we make that happen?
Let’s play!

Scenarios

Woody, every problem has a solution!

That doesn't look too realistic.

Maybe we can add another challenge here?
1. Student to CR: “I missed a couple of classes, and I’m behind on the latest chapters. Can you fill me in, and arrange for a time to teach me the material?”

2. CR: “What do I do with the student who is in a panic because she/he is behind and the assignment / test / deadline is coming up?”
3. A student once asked you for notes of a missed lecture, which you provided. But now this has become quite frequent and is making you feel uncomfortable.

4. What if a student is really angry about losing marks ‘because of what you told them’?

5. What if the student failed a midterm and is asking you whether they should drop the course or keep it?

6. A student comes up to you and asks: My major is biology and I am thinking about minoring in music. Should I do it?
Summary

• What? Clarify the question
• So what? Negotiate boundaries, Explain
• Now what? Closure
One short story…

The Parable of the Butterfly
A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day, a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as though it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. So, the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.
What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature’s way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

- What is the moral of this story?
- How does this apply to the context of Peer Leadership?
• Peer Leaders and students share responsibility for setting the agenda

• Students remain the decision makers

• When it comes to information, opinions, suggestions, activities etc., leaders and students remain free to “take it or leave it” without the fear of reprisal or the diminishment of the relationship
Reflecting on your relationship

• When they don’t work well, it is important not to take it personally; sometimes a prospective leader and student just aren’t a good “fit”. Be ready to move on if need be.

• Don’t give up easily!
What is one thing you learned from this module that you will apply when you are a peer leader?
Thank You!

Any questions, comments or feedback?