



Listen-Acknowledge-Ask approach

Listen

- Ensure you can focus on the speaker without distraction. The barn may not be the best place for an undisturbed conversation
- Private location (for significant conversations)
- Observe tone of voice and body language to understand what the person is saying
- Ensure your own body language is open and encouraging
- If you want clarification, repeat back the information in your own words and encourage the speaker to continue to explain the situation until you understand it accurately (this can require patience)
- Let the person finish speaking without interruption

Acknowledge

- No matter what the person says, don't judge by debating or disagreeing or offering your own point of view
- Keep your mind open and focus on hearing the message and emotion being conveyed
- Acknowledge both the message and the emotion (empathize when the emotion has been evident to you)
- This step creates the bridge to solutions

Ask

- Once you have acknowledged the message and emotion, ask an open-ended, solution focused question
- Don't tell/offer a solution – ask!
- Open-ended questions start with who, what, where, when and how
- Avoid “why” questions as the focus is in the past rather than the future/solution
- The solution/next step is ideally proposed by the speaker in order to heighten ownership and identify the most appropriate step for them

Putting it into words – three examples:

1. How is this situation affecting you?

What I think you are telling me is that the unknowns are frustrating for you and you can't make any plans. Did I hear that correctly?

So, given how you are thinking and feeling about this, what would be helpful to you?

2. How are you coping?

Sounds like you are fine with the way the world is right now. I wouldn't say you are pleased, but it appears you are taking it in stride.

How are able to keep yourself positive as you have described? What can you do to help the rest of your team?

3. What question can I answer for you?

It sounds like you are worried that you will be laid off. Here is the truth regarding what I know now...

How would you like information as things evolve?