

Explore Others' Paths Role Plays

When others become angry, share ugly stories, or go to silence, it often helps if you can encourage them to retrace their Path to Action and share their original observations—the facts. To do so, use your AMPP skills.

Ask to get things rolling
Mirror to confirm feelings

Paraphrase to acknowledge the story
Prime when you're getting nowhere

Role Play 1—Your Irate Neighbor.

Your next-door neighbor pounds on your door. When you open it, he appears to be boiling mad. Sure enough, when he opens his mouth he says: "I'm so mad at you I could spit nails."

Ask. (State aloud a question that will encourage him to say exactly what's going on.) He comes back with, "Never mind, I guess I'm okay," and turns to walk away.

Mirror. (Describe his apparent anger and explain that it suggests that maybe he isn't okay.) To this he says: "Now that I think about it, I'm not sure I want to bring this up. Sometimes it's best to leave things unsaid."

Paraphrase. (Restate in your own words what he said in order to keep the conversation alive.) He responds with: "It's just that your stupid mutt . . . oh never mind. I don't want to cause trouble." You wonder if your dog got into his yard and dug up his flowers again.

Prime. (Take a guess at what you think has him so angry.)

Role Play 2—The Disgusted

Coworker. You're sitting at your desk reviewing your e-mail when a woman who works in your office walks up to you and says, "I'm up to your tricks. One more time and I'm submitting a complaint." You don't know what she's talking about.

Ask. She comes back with, "You don't know, or don't care? Well if you don't care, I don't care."

Mirror. To this she says: "How come I'm the one who does all the dirty work?"

Paraphrase. She responds with: "Exactly. You have seniority, so I have to do the tedious parts of your job!" You asked her to write the weekly newsletter a couple of times (a job everyone hates) and wonder if this has her upset.

Prime.

Role Play 3—Mix and Match. Use the AMPP skill or skills of your choice in response to the following statements.

"You come prancing in here like you own the place."

"Never mind; if you think the white one looks better, I guess you know what's best."

"You're not going to actually send out that letter are you?"

(Looking upset and discouraged.) "Don't worry. I'm just fine."

"What in the name of Aunt Hilda's goat were you thinking?"

"One more stunt like that and I'm going to the boss."

Contrasting Role Plays

Contrasting is a don't/do statement that:

Addresses others' conclusions that you don't respect them or that you have a malicious purpose (the don't part).

Confirms your respect or clarifies your real purpose (the do part).

Example: "I don't want you to think I'm saying that I can't count on you. I find you to be quite reliable. I do, however, have concerns over what happened with yesterday's deadline."

Role Play 1—The Raw Meat: You just told your spouse that the meat he or she just prepared on the grill is "a bit too rare for your taste."

- Your spouse comes back sharply with: *"Sounds like you think you're the big cooking expert now!"* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time your spouse says: *"I do my best and it's never good enough for you!"* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time your spouse says with a look of pain: *"I thought you liked the way I cook."* Reply with a Contrasting statement.

Role Play 2—The Messy Cubicle.

You've just told a person who shares an office cubicle with you that you'd rather she not leave her pizza boxes, Chinese food containers, and other lunch materials on your desk.

- She abruptly responds: *"Oh I get it, now that you've been awarded employee of the month you think you can boss me around."* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time your coworker says with a hurt expression: *"I thought we were a team. I thought that we worked really well together. What happened?"* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time, prepare a Contrasting statement that you might say *before* you mention anything about the lunch mess. What would you say to avoid any misunderstanding? Offer an up-front Contrasting statement.

Role Play 3—The "Joking" Boss.

Your boss often teases you about your weight by calling you "chubby," "hefty," and the like. This is supposed to be ironic because you're actually very thin. He's good natured about it and you don't think he means any harm, but you don't like it. Finally you mustered up the nerve and suggested that you'd prefer he not refer to your weight.

- He comes back with: *"What, you can't take a joke?"* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time your boss says: *"I'm sorry. I didn't realize I was such an awful boss."* Reply with a Contrasting statement.
- This time your boss says: *"I guess I need to be hiring a lawyer."* Reply with a Contrasting statement.

STATE Role Plays

The five skills for effectively sharing or stating your views (particularly controversial, touchy, or unpopular views) can be easily remembered with the acronym STATE:



Role Play 1—The Nasty Hints. Your spouse is a high-energy workaholic who gets more done in one day than most people get done in two. You’re a decent worker but don’t see the need to always work at light speed. Over the last few weeks your spouse has been dropping hints that sound as if maybe he or she thinks you don’t have very good work habits. “Way to go pokey!” or “So you finally made it out of bed,” or “Maybe I should do it if I want to see it done right.” When you asked what he or she meant by the snide remarks, your spouse said it was just a joke. It doesn’t seem like a joke to you. It’s time to say something. STATE your path.

- Share your facts (Here’s what you’ve said and done . . .)
- Tell your story (This is what I’m beginning to conclude. . .)
- Ask for your boss’s path

** Make sure you Talk tentatively & Encourage testing.

Role Play 2—The Backup Cover-up.

Hannah, one of your computer experts at work, is responsible for backing up your network files each day. That way if your equipment crashes, you never lose more than a day’s work. This is an important but moderately annoying task. You think she may not actually be doing it all of the time. Here’s your evidence. Twice when you asked Hannah if she had backed up the system, she said she would do it later on, only you never saw her do it. You only saw her go home. The last time you asked her if she’s doing the job she said, “sort of,” but when you asked her what that meant, she told you not to worry. When she was sick last week you have no evidence that she asked someone to fill in for her. You’ve decided to say something but don’t want to make a false accusation. STATE your path.

- Share your facts (Here’s what you’ve said and done . . .)
- Tell your story (This is what I’m beginning to conclude. . .)
- Ask for your boss’s path

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Role Play 3—The Unwanted

Promotion. Your boss Chris keeps telling you that you’d make a great supervisor. You don’t want the promotion. You like what you do. Period. Chris said team players take promotions. Period. You’ve heard that Chris is submitting the paperwork to have you promoted. Yesterday Chris said you’d soon be getting a big surprise. This morning he asked you to be sure to go to the afternoon team meeting. You don’t want him to spring the announcement in the meeting and pressure you. You’ve decided to STATE your path.

- Share your facts (Here’s what you’ve said and done . . .)
- Tell your story (This is what I’m beginning to conclude. . .)
- Ask for your boss’s path

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