Seven Norms of Collaboration: A Supporting Toolkit

This Toolkit is designed to provide resources for developing and sustaining productive group interaction through the practice of *Seven Norms of Collaboration.* Consistent use of these norms enhances the quality and productivity of all forms of conversation in any group. More extensive explanation and ideas for initiating their use can be found by using the link to the National Staff Development Council from the Adaptive Schools website, and also in *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* (Garmston and Wellman, 1999, pp. 37-49).

The Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry
2. Pausing
3. Paraphrasing
4. Probing
5. Putting ideas on the table
6. Paying attention to self and others
7. Presuming positive intentions

The Tools

♦ *Seven Norms of Collaboration*
♦ *Assessing Consistency in a Group or Key Work Setting*
♦ *Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior*
♦ *Rating the Consistency of Our Group's Behavior*

Guidelines for Using the Tools

Seven Norms of Collaboration

Skillful facilitators use this tool as a third point source of norms for the group. Consider the facilitator to be the first point, the group to be the second point. The norms text serves as a third point, separate from each of the others. This provides psychological safety for the group to talk about the norms independent of the facilitator: their source is separate and clear for all to see. One common method for introducing the *Seven Norms* is to create a shared reading process, using the text of this tool. Group members then engage in reflective conversations about the reading, in pairs or table groups, guided by questions such as the following.

- "What personal connections are you making with this set of norms?"
- "Which of these norms might be most important for your full participation in a group?"
- "Considering these seven norms, which might you find most challenging?"
    - o "Given your selection, what strategies might you use to focus on this/these?"

Once the *Norms of Collaboration* are introduced, facilitators often provide each individual with a copy, and request that they bring them to each meeting. An additional reminding strategy is to provide each table with a master copy at each meeting, which members see as they arrive. Finally, a third strategy is to post a set of the norms. Effective posters most often provide only the seven norms, and may refer members to their copies of the *Seven Norms of Collaboration* for the explanation and examples that it includes. Effective groups address the *Norms* as part of opening and closing most meetings.

Norms Inventory: Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior

"There is no such thing as group behavior. All 'group behavior' results from the decisions and actions of individuals. When individual choices align in productive patterns, the group produces positive results. (Garmston and Wellman, 1999, p. 33)." Group development is enhanced as individual group members become more conscious of and skillful with the behaviors that comprise the *Seven Norms.*

This tool guides individual group members in assessing the consistency with which they practice the behavior that is promoted by each of the seven norms. The *Inventory* includes twenty-one behaviors, three for each of the seven norms.

Solo Use
The *Personal Behavior Inventory* may be used on its own, "solo," when the facilitator's purpose is to enhance the group's functioning through a focus by individual members on their behavioral choices in the group. In this case, facilitators ask each group member to complete an *Inventory*, per its instructions. Pairs or table groups then reflect on such questions as,

- "What are you noticing about your perceptions?"

In some circumstances, a facilitator may want the group to reflect on the behavior of a specific norm or two – for example paraphrasing, so the question might be,

- "Considering paraphrasing, what were you paying attention to as you rated yourself on each of the types?"

Either of these might be followed with a growth-focused question such as,

- "What strategies might you use to increase your consistency ratings?"

Combined Use
The *Personal Behavior Inventory* may also be combined with the *Assessing Consistency in a Group or Key Work Setting* tool. When individuals complete their *Personal Behavior Inventories*, they estimate the average of the three scores for each norm, marking their averages on a copy of the *Assessing Consistency in a Group or Key Work Setting* tool. This permits the conversation to include behavioral references, and also focus at the more general level of the seven norms. A common guiding question for either pairs or table groups is,

- "What are you noticing about the consistency with which you are practicing the *Norms of Collaboration*?"

This might be followed with a growth-focused question such as,

- "What might be important ways for you to increase your consistency ratings?"

Norms Inventory: Rating the Consistency of Our Group's Behavior

This tool guides individual group members, the group as a whole, and table groups when these are present, in assessing the consistency with which the group practices the behaviors which are associated with the *Seven Norms of Collaboration*.

Solo Use
The *Group Behavior Inventory* may be used on its own – by a work group, a table group in a larger group context, or a large group – when the facilitator's assessment is that the group's productivity will be enhanced by individual members taking a group perspective on the behavior of all of the members. The focus is behavioral; the attention is on the "we" of the group. The facilitator asks each member to complete a *Group Behavior Inventory* per its instructions. Pairs or table groups then reflect on questions such as,

- "What are you noticing in your data about the group?"
- "What meaning might you be making, as you consider your data about the group?"

Combined Use – At the Table
1. The *Group Behavior Inventory* may also be used with the *Assessing Consistency in a Group or Key Work Setting* tool, when the facilitator's assessment is that the group would benefit from viewing its data at the normative level – in contrast to the behavioral level above. When individuals have completed their Group Behavior Inventories, each estimates the averages of their ratings on an *Assessing Consistency* tool. In this process, each group member collates data individually. The facilitator may then ask that pairs or table groups reflect on their data about how consistently the norms are practiced in the group. A common guiding question is,

  - "What observations are you making about the group's practice of the norms?"

2. The facilitator's assessment may be that the group would benefit from considering its data in a format in which all of the information is included in a single view. In such cases, the facilitator may ask the group to combine the norms data of each individual on a single *Assessing Consistency* tool. Members mark their respective estimated averages on a group copy of the tool, each in a different color. The facilitator may guide reflection on these data with questions such as,

  - "What are your observations about the group's perceptions?"

  The facilitator might follow this with a growth-focused question such as,

  - "What norm(s) might the group focus on, to increase its productivity and satisfaction?"
    - "Given the potential of focusing on (a norm), what strategies might group members use to accomplish this?"

  At this point, the facilitator may choose to ask the group to commit to a specific focus of improvement, based on this conversation. In this event, it is important that the facilitator return to the commitment toward the conclusion of the meeting, to provide group members with an opportunity to reflect on the results of their commitment.

Combined Use – On the Wall

A facilitator may make the assessment that a group's purpose(s) may be served, and/or its productivity increased, by public consideration of its norms data. This can be accomplished in at least two ways. In both, the norms data of the group are posted on the wall. This has the effect of distancing the data from the group to a third point, which can increase the psychological safety to engage in conversation about the data.

1. This process is a variation on Combined use – At the Table 2, described above. Instead of combining the individuals' norms data onto a single *Assessing Consistency* tool in its standard size, each group is provided with a piece of chart paper. The facilitator asks that someone in each group recreate the scales of the *Assessing Consistency* tool on the chart paper, in black. Members then mark their respective estimated averages on the chart paper tool, using a different color for each member. The facilitator then guides consideration of the data with inquiries similar to those above.

2. A facilitator may use this opportunity to create a more structured study of group data. This can be done by following the process described in 1, just above, with the following addition.

   The facilitator next introduces the process of *Here's What!, So What?, Now What?* to guide the group's consideration of the data. This process uses a three-column protocol, illustrated below. The intention is to support a group in describing what they see in the data (*Here's What!*), then and separately considering the meanings of the data (*So What?*), and finally what actions the group might take (*Now What?*). This process is particularly helpful to groups that need to learn to observe data, separately from assigning meaning. And to hold off the inclination to act until their study of the data is complete. More extensive description and explanation of this process and others related to the study of data can be found in *Data-Driven Dialogue* (Wellman and Lipton, 2004. www.miravia.com).

Here's What!	*So What?*	*Now What?*

Other Guidelines and Considerations

Using the Consistency Scales
One scale is used repeatedly in all of the rating tools.

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
　　　　1　　　　2　　　　3　　　　4
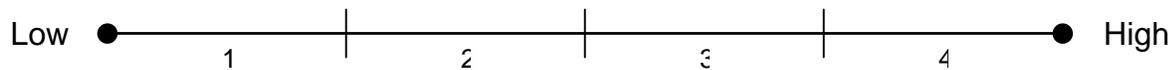
The scale is designed for flexibility and estimation. Facilitators should encourage group members to use the scale to best reflect their perceptions. The numbers on the scale describe ranges (1, 2, 3, 4). One member's perception may be a "low 2." This person would make a mark somewhere to the left of the number 2 and to the right of the crossbar below it. Another member may perceive a "high 3." The corresponding mark would be placed to the right of the number 3 and to the left of the crossbar above it. Facilitators may find it helpful to advise group members to not over-think their responses; one's first inclination is likely to be important.

Estimating Averages
Given the flexibility of the consistency scale, precise mathematical calculation of averages would not be suitable. Facilitators should be explicit about this, and be prepared to those group members who are accustomed to facing numbers only with calculator in-hand.

Consistent Attention to the *Norms of Collaboration*
Group productivity and satisfaction increase with growth in the consistency with which group members practice the behaviors that are associated with the *Norms of Collaboration*. The Norms are intended for use among group members both in meetings and in general. Effective use of the *Norms* will require consistent and repeated attention. Facilitators develop a repertoire of ways to address the norms, so that this can become a regular opening and closing event at most or all group meetings. It's all about "practice, practice, practice."

Seven Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry

Exploring perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, and interpretations promotes the development of understanding. Inquiring into the ideas of others before advocating for one's own ideas is important to productive dialogue and discussion.

2. Pausing

Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

3. Paraphrasing

Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you – "So…" or "As you are…" or "You're thinking…" – and following the starter with an efficient paraphrase assists members of the group in hearing and understanding one another as they converse and make decisions.

4. Probing

Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries – "Please say more about…" or "I'm interested in…" or "I'd like to hear more about…" or "Then you are saying…" increases the clarity and precision of the group's thinking.

5. Putting ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue and discussion. Label the intention of your comments. For example: "Here is one idea…" or "One thought I have is…" or "Here is a possible approach…" or "Another consideration might be…".

6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion are facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, and is aware of what (s)he is saying and how it is said as well as how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning styles when planning, facilitating, and participating in group meetings and conversations.

7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others' intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and discussion, and prevents unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in speech is one manifestation of this norm.

Norms of Collaboration:
## Assessing Consistency in a Group or Key Work Setting

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

2. Pausing

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

3. Paraphrasing

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

4. Probing

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

5. Putting ideas on the table

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

6. Paying attention to self and others

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

7. Presuming positive intentions

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
    1   2   3   4

Norms Inventory:
Rating the Consistency of My Personal Behavior

Place a mark on each scale, to reflect your perception of your personal behavior.

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry.

A. I inquire to explore to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

B. I invite others to inquire into my perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————●
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

C. I inquire before I advocate.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

2. Pausing to allow time for thought.

A. I pause after asking questions.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

B. I pause after others speak to reflect before responding.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————●
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

C. I pause before asking questions to allow time for artful construction.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

3. Paraphrasing in a pattern of pause – paraphrase – question to ensure deep listening.

A. I listen and paraphrase to acknowledge and clarify.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

B. I listen and paraphrase to summarize and organize.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

C. I listen and paraphrase to shift levels of abstraction.

Low ●————┼————┼————┼————● High
　　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4

4. Probing to clarify.

A. I seek to understand the meaning of words.
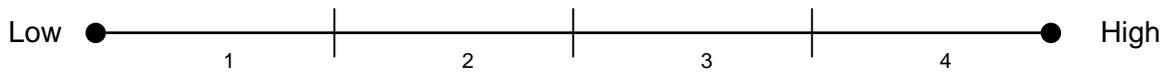
Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4

B. I seek understanding of data, explanations, ideas, anecdotes, and generalizations.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4
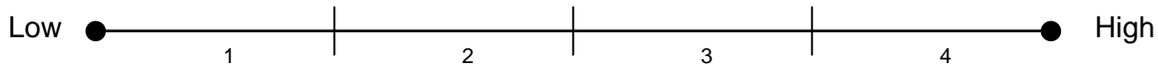
C. I explore the implications and consequences of proposals and plans..

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4
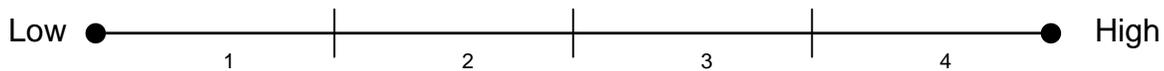
5. Putting ideas, data, perceptions on the table, and pulling them off.

A. I state the intentions of my communications.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4

B. I provide relevant facts, ideas, opinions, and inferences.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4

C. I remove or announce modification of ideas, opinions, and points of view.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
   1   2   3   4

6. Paying attention to self and others to monitor our ways of working.

A. I balance participation and open opportunities for others to contribute and respond.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4
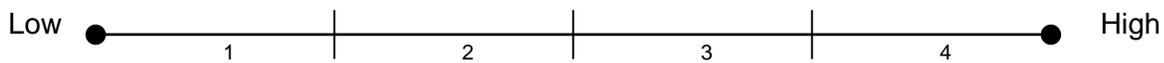
B. I restrain my impulses to respond, react, or rebut at inappropriate times & in ineffective ways.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4
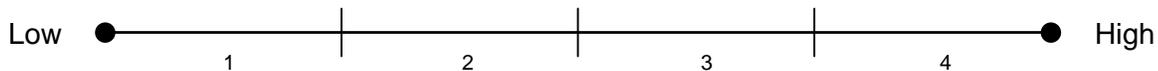
C. I maintain awareness of the group's task, processes, and development.

Low •————|————|————|————• High
        1   2   3   4
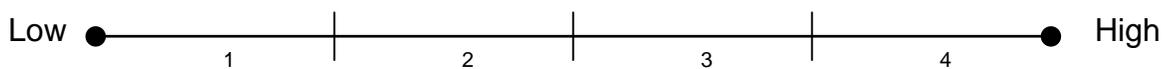
7. Presuming positive intentions to support a non-judgmental atmosphere.

A. I communicate respectfully, whether I agree or disagree.

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
       1   2   3   4
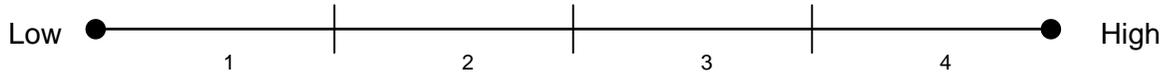
B. I embed positive presuppositions in my paraphrases, summaries, and comments.

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
       1   2   3   4
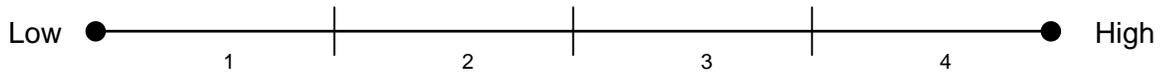
C. I embed positive presuppositions when I inquire or probe for specificity.

Low ●————|————|————|————● High
       1   2   3   4
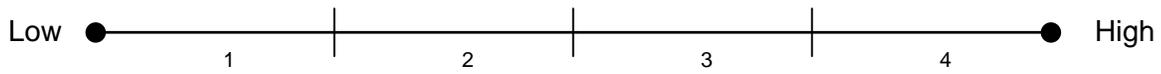
Norms Inventory:
Rating the Consistency of Our Group's Behavior

Place a mark on each scale, to reflect your perception of the group's consistency.

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry.

A. We inquire to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
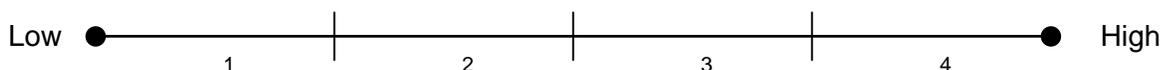
B. We invite others to inquire into our perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
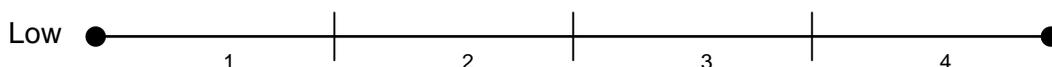
C. We inquire before we advocate.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
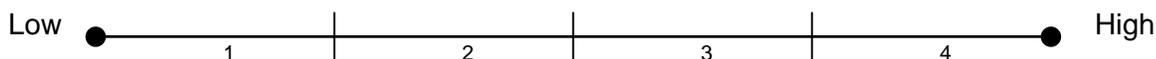
2. Pausing to allow time for thought.

A. We pause after asking questions.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
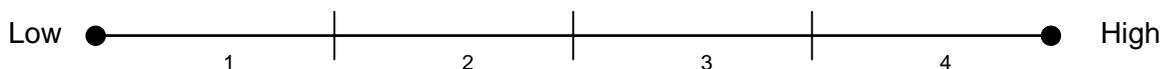
B. We pause after others speak to reflect before responding.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
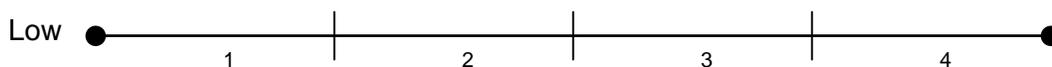
C. We pause before asking questions to allow time for artful construction.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
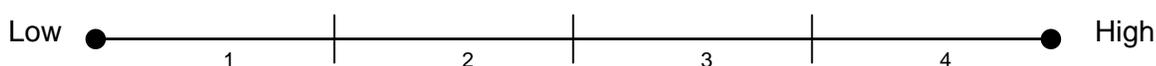
3. Paraphrasing in a pattern of pause – paraphrase – question to ensure deep listening.

A. We listen and paraphrase to acknowledge and clarify.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High

B. We listen and paraphrase to summarize and organize.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
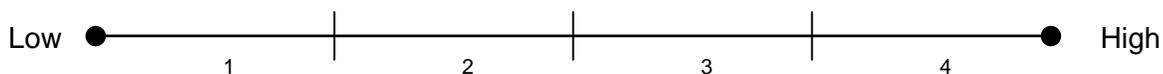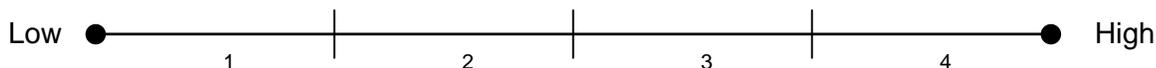
C. We listen and paraphrase to shift levels of abstraction.

Low |————1————|————2————|————3————|————4————| High
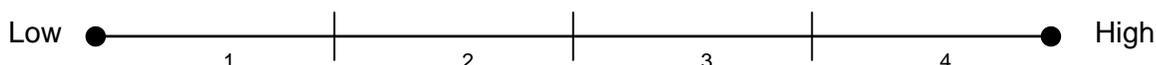
4. Probing to clarify.

A. We seek to understand the meaning of words.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
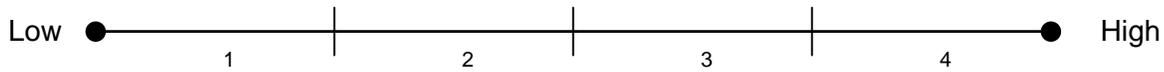
B. We seek understanding of data, explanations, ideas, anecdotes, and generalizations.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
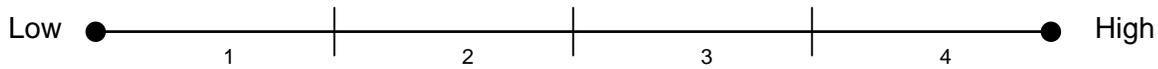
C. We explore the implications and consequences of proposals and plans..

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
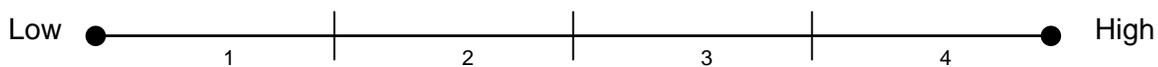
5. Putting ideas, data, perceptions on the table, and pulling them off.

A. We state the intentions of our communications.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
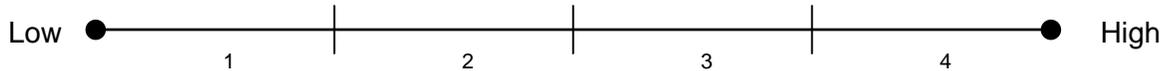
B. We provide relevant facts, ideas, opinions, and inferences.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
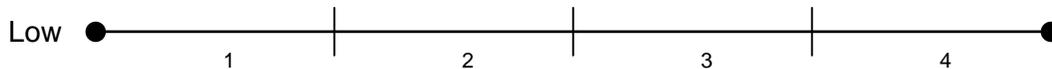
C. We remove or announce modification of ideas, opinions, and points of view.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
   1   2   3   4
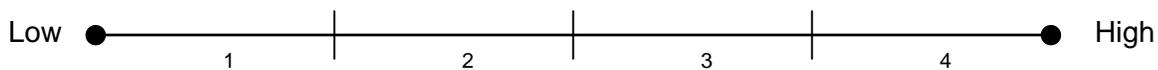
6. Paying attention to self and others to monitor our ways of working.

A. We balance participation and open opportunities for each other to contribute and respond.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
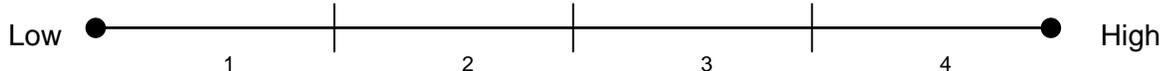
B. We restrain our impulses to respond, react, or rebut at inappropriate times & in ineffective ways.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
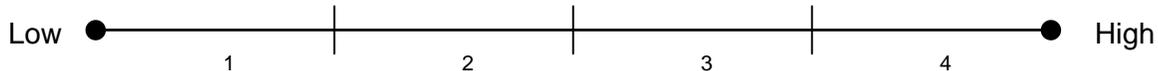
C. We maintain awareness of the group's task, processes, and development.

Low ●————————|————————|————————|————————● High
       1   2   3   4
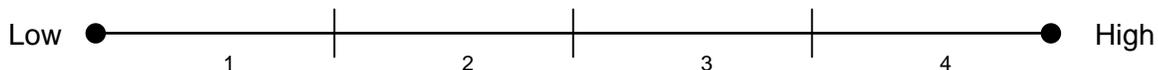
7. Presuming positive intentions to support a non-judgmental atmosphere.

A. We communicate respectfully, whether we agree or disagree.

Low ●———————|———————|———————|———————● High
        1   2   3   4
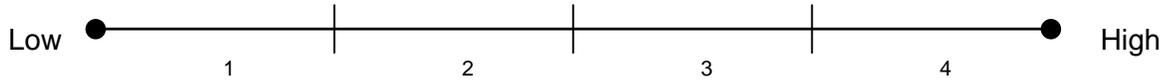
B. We embed positive presuppositions in our paraphrases, summaries, and comments.

Low ●———————|———————|———————|———————● High
        1   2   3   4
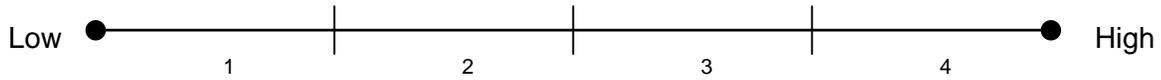
C. We embed positive presuppositions when we inquire or probe for specificity.

Low ●———————|———————|———————|———————● High
        1   2   3   4