

# Looping for Understanding CHEAT SHEET



## The Goal:

**To understand.** By listening better—in ways people can see.

## Steps:

1. **Understand** what the person is saying.
2. **Communicate** what you understood.
3. **Check** to make sure you got it right.
4. **Correct** your understanding.
5. **Check Again.**

## Why?

When we listen, our brains make rapid assumptions we aren't aware we're making. We are wrong more often than we think. And when we talk, we don't always articulate what we mean the first time.

To grasp what someone *really* means requires authentic curiosity & artful double-checking.

1. **Understand:** Listen for what seems to matter most *to the person speaking*. Clues: strong or unexpected words (*I felt sick to my stomach*), metaphors (*like an earthquake*) superlatives (*worst, best*), non-verbal cues (*slower, quieter voice or trembling tone*)
2. **Communicate:** Distill what you think the person meant, in the most elegant language you can muster. "*So you were disappointed by the Mayor's actions because you care deeply about what happens to the kids in this school.*"
3. **Check:** "*Does that sound right?*"
4. **Correct:** If the person says no, ask them to fill in what you missed or wasn't accurate. ("*What did I miss?*")
5. **Check Again:** (If you get a small nod—or anything other than a "YES! Exactly!") Try again. "*It sounds like I didn't quite get it. What did I miss?*"

*"People are much more willing & able to understand one another when they feel understood themselves."*  
—Gary Friedman & Jack Himmelstein, *Challenging Conflict*

To Learn More: Looping is one technique in a broader quest for understanding. To learn how to have profound, transformational conversations, read the book *Challenging Conflict* or sign up for virtual or in-person trainings with the Center for Understanding in Conflict: <http://understandinginconflict.org/events/>