Responses to Questions during 7/30/24 Webinar on Looping

**Looping vs. Reflective Listening**

Looping and reflective listening share similarities but have distinct nuances, especially within the understanding-based conflict resolution and mediation model. Both techniques involve listening and reflecting on a person's words to ensure accurate understanding. However, looping goes a step further by repeating the content and actively engaging with the underlying feelings and intentions and then asking the person to confirm that the understanding was correct and complete before moving on. It's a dynamic, iterative process to deepen understanding and create a shared meaning.

**Frequency of Looping and Stating Perceptions**

It's not about a set number of loops but about achieving clarity and ensuring all parties feel heard. After looping, you can state your perception by gently sharing your understanding of what was said, clarifying that it's your interpretation, and inviting correction or further clarification. For example, you might say, "It sounds like you're feeling [emotion] because [reason]. Is that right, or is there more to it?"

**Example of Looping a Feeling**

If someone expresses frustration about a situation, you might loop by saying, "It seems like you're feeling frustrated because things haven't been going as planned. Is that what you're experiencing?"

**Encouraging Reconsideration Beyond "Did I get it right?"**

While "Did I get it right?" is a straightforward way to check understanding, you can encourage deeper reflection by asking open-ended questions like, "Is there more about that you'd like to share?" or "How does that feel to you now as you hear it reflected?" This can gently invite the party to reconsider or expand upon their initial statements without forcing them.

**Definition and Application of Looping**

Looping is a method of reflecting what a person has communicated, both in content and emotion to the satisfaction of the speaker, to ensure accurate understanding and to build trust and connection. It is most beneficial when parties feel misunderstood or need to clarify complex or emotionally charged issues. The goal is to create understanding which can lead to an openness to engage in deeper exploration.

**Handling Consent and Comfort**

Looping can lead to deeper emotional exploration, sometimes beyond what a person is comfortable with. It's crucial to monitor the parties' comfort level and explicitly ask for consent to delve deeper. You might say, "I notice this brings up some strong emotions. Are you willing to explore this further?"

**Power Imbalances**

Power imbalances can affect how looping is used, as one party may dominate the conversation or feel uncomfortable expressing their true feelings and it is possible that looping may expose those power imbalances. It's essential to be sensitive to these dynamics, ensuring both parties have equal opportunities to share and feel heard. Mediators can also loop in a way that acknowledges the power dynamics, helping to create a more balanced conversation.

**Addressing Expectations of Problem-Solving**

When parties expect the mediator to "fix" their problems, it's essential to clarify the mediator's role and the purpose of the mediation process. You might say, "I hear that you're looking for solutions, and while I'm here to help facilitate the conversation, the solutions ultimately come from both of you. You know better than anyone what is important to you and what solutions would be best. My role is to help you understand each other better and find common ground."

**Avoiding Overuse of Looping**

It's easy to become enamored with looping but overusing it can overwhelm parties or make them feel scrutinized. To avoid this, be mindful of the pacing and the parties' emotional states. Balance looping with periods of silence or open-ended questions that allow the parties to lead the conversation. It's also helpful to periodically check in with the parties about the process, asking if the current approach works for them. And remember, looping is only necessary where there is a need to increase understanding.