

## Cornell Note

Which 'enemies of efficacy' prevent you and your team from getting better results in your school?

Enemies of Efficacy	Notes
Magnitude	
Ambiguity	
Negativity	
Judgment	
Transfer to Practice: What next steps can you take to overcome the enemies of efficacy that are most prevalent in your school?	

## Willing to Be Disturbed

As we work together to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and strange ally—our willingness to be disturbed. Our willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give us the answers we need to the problems of today. Paradoxically, we can only find those answers by admitting we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time.

We weren't trained to admit we don't know. Most of us were taught to sound certain and confident, to state our opinion as if it were true. We haven't been rewarded for being confused. Or for asking more questions rather than giving quick answers. We've also spent many years listening to others mainly to determine whether we agree with them or not. We don't have time or interest to sit and listen to those who think differently than we do.

But the world now is quite perplexing. We no longer live in those sweet, slow days when life felt predictable, when we actually knew what to do next. We live in a complex world, we often don't know what's going on, and we won't be able to understand its complexity unless we spend more time in not knowing.

It is very difficult to give up our certainties—our positions, our beliefs, our explanations. These help define us; they lie at the heart of our personal identity. Yet I believe we will succeed in changing this world only if we can think and work together in new ways. Curiosity is what we need. We don't have to let go of what we believe, but we do need to be curious about what someone else believes. We do need to acknowledge that their way of interpreting the world might be essential to our survival.

We live in a dense and tangled global system. Because we live in different parts of this complexity, and because no two people are physically identical, we each experience life differently. It's impossible for any two people to ever see things exactly the same.

To be curious about how someone else interprets things, we have to be willing to admit that we're not capable of figuring things out alone. If our solutions don't work as well as we want them to, if our explanations of why something happened don't feel sufficient, it's time to begin asking others about what they see and think.

There are many ways to sit and listen for the differences. Lately, I've been listening for what surprises me. This isn't easy – I'm accustomed to sitting there nodding my head to those saying things I agree with. But when I notice what surprises me, I'm able to see my own views more dearly, including my beliefs and assumptions.

Noticing what surprises and disturbs me has been a very useful way to see invisible beliefs. If what you say surprises me, I must have been assuming something else was true. If what you say disturbs me, I must believe something contrary to you. My shock at your position exposes my own position. These moments are great gifts. If I can see my beliefs and assumptions, I can decide whether I still value them.

I hope you'll begin a conversation, listening for what's new. Listen as best you can for what's different, for what surprises you. See if this practice helps you learn something new. If you try this with several people, you might find yourself laughing in delight as you realize how many unique ways there are to be human.

When we listen with less judgment, we always develop better relationships with each other. It's not differences that divide us. It's our judgments about each other that do. Curiosity and good listening bring us back together.

Sometimes we hesitate to listen for differences because we don't want to change. We're comfortable with our lives, and if we listened to anyone who raised questions, we'd have to get engaged in changing things. But most of us do see things in our life or in the world that we would like to be different. If that's true, we have to listen more, not less. And we have to be willing to move into the very uncomfortable place of uncertainty.

We can't be creative if we refuse to be confused. Change always starts with confusion; cherished interpretations must dissolve to make way for the new. Of course it's scary to give up what we know, but the abyss is where newness lives. If we can move through the fear and enter the abyss, we are rewarded greatly. We rediscover we're creative.

As the world grows more strange and puzzling and difficult, I don't believe most of us want to keep struggling through it alone, I can't know what to do from my own narrow perspective. I know I need a better understanding of what's going on. I need new ideas and solutions for the problems I care about. I know I need to talk to you to discover those. I expect to be disturbed by what I hear from you. I know we don't have to agree with each other in order to think well together. There is no need for us to be joined at the head. We are joined by our human hearts.

Wheatley, M. (2009). *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*. Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, CA.



National  
School  
Reform  
Faculty

Harmony  
Education  
Center

[www.nsrharmony.org](http://www.nsrharmony.org)

## Text Rendering Experience

---

*Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.*

### **Purpose**

To collaboratively construct meaning, clarify, and expand our thinking about a text or document.

### **Roles**

A facilitator to guide the process.

A scribe to track the phrases and words that are shared.

### **Set Up**

Take a few moments to review the document and mark the sentence, the phrase, and the word that you think is particularly important for our work.

### **Steps**

1. First Round: Each person shares a *sentence* from the document that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant.
2. Second Round: Each person shares a *phrase* that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each phrase.
3. Third Round: Each person shares the *word* that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.
4. The group discusses what they heard and what it says about the document.
5. The group shares the words that emerged and any new insights about the document.
6. The group debriefs the text rendering process.