# Working and not working – Transcript

There are two tools that really help with analysis and planning for action. One of them is called "working and not working." This tool greatly aids in problem-solving, negotiation, and deepening understanding. When you look at the "four plus one," it is a method to reflect on what we've accomplished and what we have not. It's a way to give ourselves credit for what we've done and to examine what remains to be completed.

The "working not working" tool has, in some ways, been around since people started analyzing the pros and cons of situations. Benjamin Franklin, while crossing the Atlantic, wrote about how to assess pros and cons and give them weight. This concept has been around for literally hundreds or even thousands of years. However, it is crucial to look at what's working and not working from different perspectives, such as from the perspective of the person you are planning or analyzing with, the staff, family, or any other key stakeholder.

In some cases, there is a perception conflict where, for example, a person wants to do something, and a parent might fear for their safety. Addressing this kind of conflict involves incorporating core principles of negotiation. The first principle is ensuring that people feel listened to. If you do a good job of capturing the person's, family members', and staff's perspectives of what's working and not working, the emotional temperature drops, making people more ready for discussion.

The second principle of negotiation involves starting with common ground. By identifying what's working from everyone's perspective or what's not working, it provides a common starting point for discussions, focusing on areas of agreement rather than disagreement.

Data shows that the "working not working" tool is second only to "important to, important for" in terms of usage frequency. It is found to be easy to use and very powerful if you capture people's perspectives honestly, even if you disagree with them, and start from a place of common ground.

The third core principle, being unconditionally constructive, requires that no matter how tempted you are to take sides or criticize someone's perception, you don’t. Instead, break down issues like safety so that they can be thoroughly examined.

Years ago, I ran a day service where a woman named Mary wanted to take public transportation on her own in the Washington, D.C. area, which has good public transport. Mary had learned the bus routes thoroughly. However, her mother was concerned about her safety. Initially, we dismissed it as overprotective, but Mary wanted to prove her independence. So, one day, she rode the bus for several hours on her own. Despite her small stature making her physically vulnerable, she managed without any issues. Mary even convinced a bus driver to take her home as if it were a cab. She arrived home safely, and the crisis was averted.

The very next day, I met with Mary's mother, who then trusted me enough to reveal that Mary had been molested a few years earlier by someone who had convinced her to go with him, making her still vulnerable. Understanding her mother’s concerns about safety, we then discussed alternatives. We considered Mary taking the bus with a friend named Stephanie, who was known for being protective. Mary's mother felt that Stephanie could offer better protection than any staff, allowing Mary to achieve her independence while ensuring her safety. This solution satisfied both Mary's desire for independence and her mother's need for her safety.