





TOP 5

Tools for Communicating in Tough Situations

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Respectful, positive interactions even during disagreements can be vital determinants of business success.¹ Veterinary team members face challenges daily (eg, finances, patient-care and end-of-life decisions, holding each other accountable for errors), and they must learn the skills to be successful when faced with critical conversations.

Top 5 Tools for Communicating in Tough Situations

- Show Empathy
- Use Personality & Behavior Assessments
- Be Aware of Body Language
- Listen Respectfully
- Be Confident

Empathy means being able to place yourself in another's shoes.

Here are 5 tools that will help you hold your own in tough situations.

1 Show Empathy

Empathy means being able to place yourself in another's shoes. Consider the common occurrence of a client who comes in during emergency hours with a very sick pet—and few funds. The client first would have experienced the *freeze* response when he or she discovered the pet's problem. Now his or her adrenaline level is through the roof and the brain is in *flee* or *fight* mode because a beloved pet is in distress. Also, the client is in an unfamiliar, stressful environment (ie, the veterinary practice) and is hearing words that are difficult to comprehend (ie, medical terms).

Ask yourself, *How would I like to be treated if I did not work here and I was on the other side of that counter or examination table?* Showing empathy for such clients includes having financing solutions readily available and displaying your understanding of client concerns by carefully explaining patient information in layman's language.

2 Use Personality & Behavior Assessments

Understanding personality preferences is one of

the most helpful tools for good communication and many iterations of these tests, based on William Marston's theory of traits, are available. The DiSC Profile and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, 2 of the most common profile tools, are based on the fact that humans are predisposed to their communication preferences. Someone with a high value in a DiSC category tends to have specific communication preferences.

- **Dominant** people prefer a direct and objective style.
- **Influencers** are visual; they do well with models and videos and are more dramatic in their style.
- Those with **Steadiness** prefer a softer, more emotional approach.
- Those who are **Conscientious** like lots of facts and details—and time to ponder them.²


Tips on Active Listening

- Avoid looking away from the client.
- Do not multitask when talking with the client.
- Take notes while listening.
- Be present—not distracted.

Confidence comes from knowledge and practice and gives people the power to stand up for their beliefs.


(See **Resources**, page 38, for tests to learn your personality style.)

3 Be Aware of Body Language

Experts say people communicate mostly  (ie, 55%-65%) with their bodies.³ The ability to read and understand body language is instinctual, and studies show 2-day-old babies can read their mothers' body language.⁴ Humans in distress react with their limbic brain to freeze, flee, or fight.⁵ Learning how to react to and intervene with another person's freeze response may avoid the need to deal with a fight.


Consider a client waiting patiently for her appointment. She is seated, and at first her foot is slowly wiggling and her hands are relaxed and calm. As time passes, she frowns, impatiently checks her watch, begins rapidly moving her foot, and clenches her hands. She is exhibiting the flee response (ie, a nervous reaction to unhappiness). A team member can head off a fight by reading the client's body language and reacting with an appropriate response (eg, acknowledging the delay, checking the wait time, offering coffee, offering to reschedule the appointment).

4 Listen Respectfully

When their beliefs are questioned, people tend  to react with either silence or violence.¹ Instead of openly and actively listening, they shut down and do not respond, or they fly into a rage and react in a manner they later regret. Active listening is similar to the way people concentrate when playing the game Simon Says—they focus so they do not make mistakes. (See **Tips on Active Listening**.)

Everyone deserves that level of intense listening, even during a disagreement. Find common ground and build on the agreement.

5 Be Confident

The power of confidence cannot be measured. Confidence gives a great  athlete the power to take the final shot to win the game and the

brilliant surgeon the courage to push the envelope of the next cutting-edge procedure. Confidence comes from knowledge and practice and gives people the power to stand up for their beliefs. Training, studying, and

Tips on Building Confidence

- Practice your body language by watching a video of yourself to see what improvements are needed.
- Try out your conversation with a noninvolved party.
- Make a list of common, difficult topics and questions and plan responses.

TAKE ACTION

- 1 Have team members take personality assessments to help them understand how each team member prefers to give and receive information.
- 2 Teach team members the art of active listening and encourage them to use the skill when communicating with other team members and clients.

Resources

Many websites offer free personality testing, although with varying degrees of credibility.

- DISC Personality Test. [123test.com/disc-personality-test](https://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test)
- DiSC Profile. discprofile.com/products/disc-classic and discprofile.com/products/disc-classic-2-0
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator. myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type-mbti-basics

practicing how to gracefully and respectfully engage in tough interactions builds the confidence needed to handle hard topics. (See **Tips on Building Confidence**, page 37.)

Conclusion

Tough situations handled well are a win-win for both parties involved. Respectful disagreement can strengthen teams, bond clients, prevent mistakes, and even save patients' lives. ■

References

1. Patterson K, Grenny J, McMillan R, Switzler A. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill; 2012.
2. DiSC personality test. 123 Test. <https://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test>. Accessed November 2016.
3. Mehrabian AL. *Silent Messages*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company; 1980.
4. Medina J. *Brain Rules: 12 Tips for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*. Seattle, WA: Pear Press; 2008.
5. Navarro J, Karlins M. *What Every Body Is Saying: An Ex-FBI Agent's Guide to Speed-Reading People*. New York, NY: HarperCollins; 2008.



DEBBIE BOONE, CCS, CVPM, is president of 2 Manage Vets Consulting Service. She has more than 30 years of experience, including 23 years as practice administrator and COO of both small and mixed animal practices. Her focus is on coaching exceptional communication, client service, and team culture. She is certified in customer service and Fear Free, which she believes helps create good human experiences, too.

FUN FACT: Debbie's first childhood dog was a puppy she spotted on a country roadside on the way to the farm. The dog was still waiting when she came back and her mom gave in to her pleading and stopped. Sandy found her forever home and was Debbie's shadow through many childhood adventures.

INTERCEPTOR[™] PLUS (milbemycin oxime/praziquantel)

Caution
Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Before using this product, please consult the product insert, a summary of which follows:

Indications

INTERCEPTOR PLUS is indicated for the prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*; and for the treatment and control of adult roundworm (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonina*), adult hookworm (*Ancylostoma caninum*), adult whipworm (*Trichuris vulpis*), and adult tapeworm (*Taenia pisiformis*, *Echinococcus multilocularis* and *Echinococcus granulosus*) infections in dogs and puppies two pounds of body weight or greater and six weeks of age and older.

Dosage and Administration

INTERCEPTOR PLUS should be administered orally, once every month, at the minimum dosage of 0.23 mg/lb (0.5 mg/kg) milbemycin oxime, and 2.28 mg/lb (5 mg/kg) praziquantel. For heartworm prevention, give once monthly for at least 6 months after exposure to mosquitoes (see **EFFECTIVENESS**).

See product insert for complete dosing and administration information.

Contraindications

There are no known contraindications to the use of INTERCEPTOR PLUS.

Warnings

Not for use in humans. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children.

Precautions

Treatment with fewer than 6 monthly doses after the last exposure to mosquitoes may not provide complete heartworm prevention (see **EFFECTIVENESS**).

Prior to administration of INTERCEPTOR PLUS, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infections. At the discretion of the veterinarian, infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms. INTERCEPTOR PLUS is not effective against adult *D. immitis*.

Mild, transient hypersensitivity reactions, such as labored breathing, vomiting, hypersalivation, and lethargy, have been noted in some dogs treated with milbemycin oxime carrying a high number of circulating microfilariae. These reactions are presumably caused by release of protein from dead or dying microfilariae.

Do not use in puppies less than six weeks of age.

Do not use in dogs or puppies less than two pounds of body weight.

The safety of INTERCEPTOR PLUS has not been evaluated in dogs used for breeding or in lactating females. Studies have been performed with milbemycin oxime alone.

Adverse Reactions

The following adverse reactions have been reported in dogs after administration of milbemycin oxime or praziquantel: vomiting, diarrhea, depression/lethargy, ataxia, anorexia, convulsions, weakness, and salivation.

To report suspected adverse drug events, contact Elanco US Inc. at 1-888-545-5973 or the FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS.

For technical assistance call Elanco US Inc. at 1-888-545-5973.

Information for Owner or Person Treating Animal:

Echinococcus multilocularis and *Echinococcus granulosus* are tapeworms found in wild canids and domestic dogs. *E. multilocularis* and *E. granulosus* can infect humans and cause serious disease (alveolar hydatid disease and hydatid disease, respectively). Owners of dogs living in areas where *E. multilocularis* or *E. granulosus* are endemic should be instructed on how to minimize their risk of exposure to these parasites, as well as their dog's risk of exposure. Although INTERCEPTOR PLUS was 100% effective in laboratory studies in dogs against *E. multilocularis* and *E. granulosus*, no studies have been conducted to show that the use of this product will decrease the incidence of alveolar hydatid disease or hydatid disease in humans. Because the prepatent period for *E. multilocularis* may be as short as 26 days, dogs treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

Effectiveness

Heartworm Prevention:

In a well-controlled laboratory study, INTERCEPTOR PLUS was 100% effective against induced heartworm infections when administered once monthly for 6 consecutive months. In well-controlled laboratory studies, neither one dose nor two consecutive doses of INTERCEPTOR PLUS provided 100% effectiveness against induced heartworm infections.

Intestinal Nematodes and Cestodes Treatment and Control:

Elimination of the adult stage of hookworm (*Ancylostoma caninum*), roundworm (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonina*), whipworm (*Trichuris vulpis*) and tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*, *Echinococcus granulosus*, *Taenia pisiformis*) infections in dogs was demonstrated in well-controlled laboratory studies.

Palatability

In a field study of 115 dogs offered INTERCEPTOR PLUS, 108 dogs (94.0%) accepted the product when offered from the hand as if a treat, 1 dog (0.9%) accepted it from the bowl with food, 2 dogs (1.7%) accepted it when it was placed in the dog's mouth, and 4 dogs (3.5%) refused it.

Storage Information

Store at room temperature, between 59° and 77°F (15-25°C).

How Supplied

INTERCEPTOR PLUS is available in four strengths, formulated according to the weight of the dog. Each strength is available in color-coded packages of six chewable tablets each. The tablets containing 2.3 mg milbemycin oxime/22.8 mg praziquantel or 5.75 mg milbemycin oxime/57 mg praziquantel are also available in color coded packages of one chewable tablet each.

Manufactured for: Elanco US Inc.
Greenfield, IN 46140, USA
Product of Japan

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