

Unloading Loaded Language:

Making space for strong feelings...without derailing the discussion

Examples (from workplace mediation)

1. Melanie is such a slob. I can't even work with her because I'm always having to clean up her messes. I'm not her maid!
2. Jamal is a terrible leader! He never says anything good about the work I do but always has something to criticize me about.

Tips:

- **Stay calm!** This isn't about you. It's your job to help people hear and understand one another, not weigh in on the merits of their ideas.
- Dig through the negative **to find what the person DOES want**. Buried in their statements is something even their "opponent" can probably support in some way (what's the interest behind their position). The more you know about the issues, the more easily you can do this but you don't need to be an expert. Listen for what's important to people.
- **Translate the loaded language** into something more neutral. Try to preserve the interest and check back to get the speaker's agreement before you go on.

Practice:

1. You know, these freeloaders aren't even trying. They're just happy to live off the government and let the rest of us foot the bill. If they really wanted a better life, they would get off their [REDACTED] and get a job.
2. It blows my mind! The fishermen couldn't care less about the native fish. They parade around like they're modern day environmentalists but they're really just hoping to out-do their redneck friends and bring in a giant brown trout. It's like they're compensating for something!
3. These religious wackos are so out of control. They think just because some special book says my relationship is sinful that they have a right to tell me how to live. It's like they're self-appointed sex and love police. They should just stay out of it!

	Statement
A → B C Reframe D Observe	1. People just keep moving here. Fort Collins used to be such a great place and now it's just overrun. We should close the gates already! Let them live in Greeley! I don't even recognize most of the people I see around town anymore.
A → B C Reframe D Observe	2. Those city folks have no clue what it's like to live out here. They want to tell us what to do. I'm feeding America, I'm working my land every day to feed those city slickers and now they want to come tell me how to run my business!?!
B → C D Reframe A Observe	3. Students around here are just out of control. Our neighborhood used to be nice and quiet. They don't even care that they keep us up half the night with their music. And the garbage! Don't even get me started!
B → C D Reframe A Observe	4. These pro-pot hippies are so full of it! Everyone acts like it's no big deal but my grandson is watching all of this. You can't walk down the street without getting a second-hand high and everyone just thinks it's normal. I don't want my grandson wasting his life like these low-life stoners!
C → D A Reframe B Observe	5. The last thing we need around here is another McDonalds or big-box store. I get all my food from the farmer's market or the co-op. I know where those products come from. I know the farmers! People who can't wait to get their next Wal Mart fix don't even care about our community.
C → D A Reframe B Observe	6. All these yahoos that want to bring wolves back are living in a Disney fantasy. It's going to run ranching right out of our state. It's a part of our history and our present-day economy and they want to kill it all to save a savage beast!
D → A B Reframe C Observe	7. All I have to say is if you're here, you ought to speak English. Enough of the "hola" and "konichiwa" garbage. If you're really American, speak English. I mean how am I supposed to talk to my neighbors and keep the neighborhood intact if they don't even speak English!
D → A B Reframe C Observe	8. Who are we kidding? Monsanto hasn't ever helped anyone. They're environment killers. They're poisoning us and our children with their GMO everything. We should ban GMOs and pesticides statewide!