

Starting a Conversation - The ARE Method

When you're trying to make conversation, you cannot always follow a pre-written script, as most conversations do not follow a one-size-fits-all method.

Fleming (2013) has come up with an acronym called ARE to use when facilitating small talk and starting a conversation with different individuals. The acronym is structured as follows:

A NCHOR: An observation on your mutual shared reality (i.e., something that you both are experiencing and witness to). This is dependent on the setting you encounter the individual in. For instance, if you encounter them at the grocery store, you could remark on the items that are currently on sale or a product you are both buying.

R EVEAL: Say something that connects you to the anchor (i.e., "I found these melons for a better price last week at X store"). You can also use a story or experience to help connect yourself to the conversation.

E NCOURAGE: Keep the conversation going by asking a question. The question can be open-ended (i.e., "what do you think?") or more specific ("have you found a better price?").

Below, we have included a script that will help you incorporate the ARE method into a conversation. This is a sample of a conversation that John is having with Mila, a woman he just met to get to know her better and perhaps even pursue a romantic connection. They are at a get-together at a mutual friend (Landon's) house.

John: Hi, how are you doing today?

Mila: I'm ok and you?

A: John: I'm doing well. Have you ever been to Landon's place before?

Mila: A few times before, but I've never been to a get-together.

R: John: Yea, I used to live in this neighborhood, actually in a building that is close to here. It had great amenities, but was really expensive, so I moved to a building on the opposite side of town.

E: John: Do you live in this neighborhood?

Notice how we have placed the 'A', 'R' and 'E' at different points throughout the conversation to demonstrate how each part of the acronym is used?

Activity

Imagine you are having a conversation with someone new. Using the **ARE** method, write some points you would use in the conversation.

Situation:

A:

R:

E:

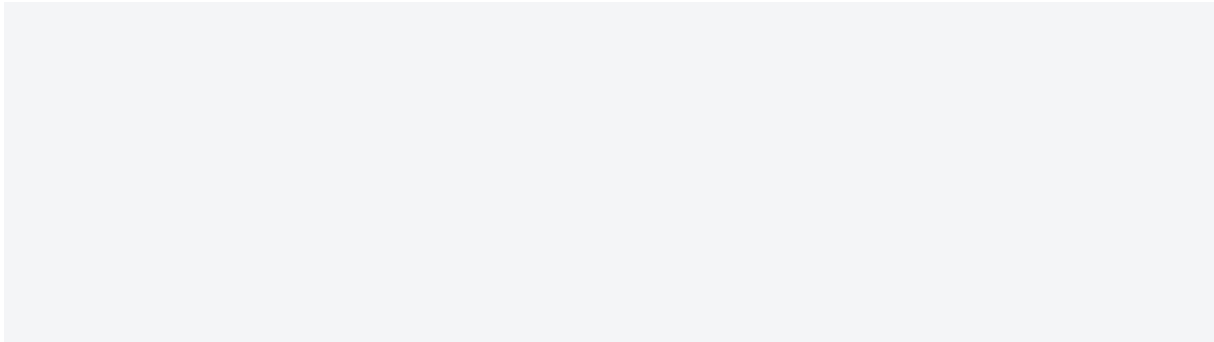
Activity

Now, we are going to do a brainstorming activity. Think of a situation in the past where you had trouble starting a conversation and write it down below. Then, take yourself through each of the steps of the acronym to help plan your conversation.

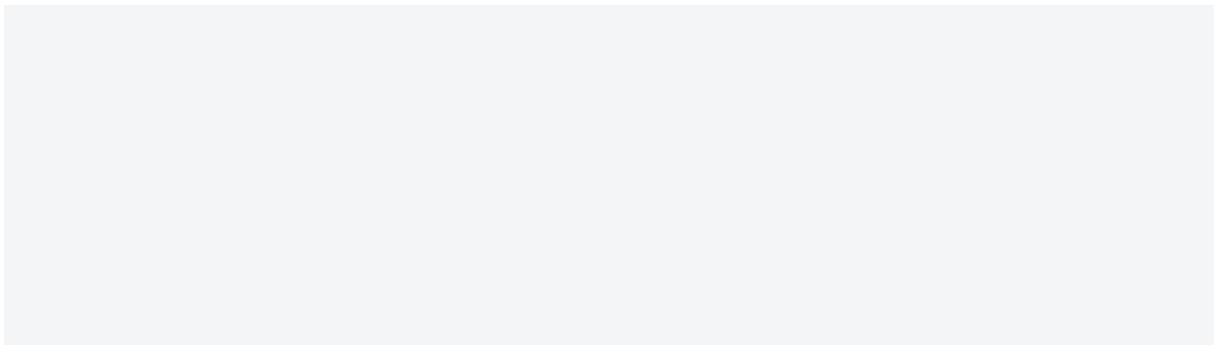
Conversation Situation or Setting:

Person you were talking to:

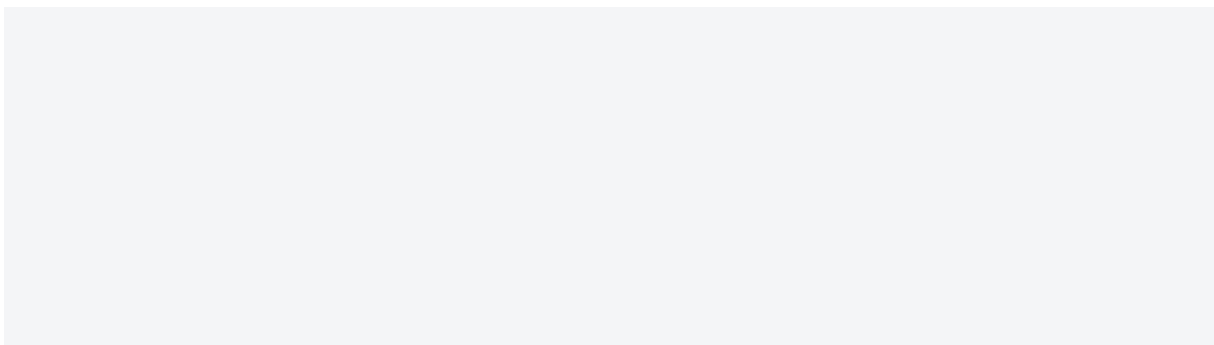
What was the shared experience or setting that I could have used as a bridge?



What experience or story could I have used to provide more detail?



What question(s) could I have asked the other person to better engage them?



References

- Fleming, C. (2013). *It's the Way You Say It: Becoming Articulate, Well-Spoken and Clear (2nd Edition)*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

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