



### EXERCISE 3: Building On Instead of Yeah-Butting

(based on *Conversation Transformation: Recognize and Overcome the 6 Most Destructive Communication Patterns*)

**Purpose:** To communicate more effectively in collaborative situations with those who dismiss ideas by saying suggestions will not work (yeah-but people). While yeah-butting is frustrating, your responsibility in this exercise is to learn to stay engaged. You are developing skills to keep a conversation going so you can examine issues more closely.

**Guiding Tips:** Keep in mind a person dismissing ideas is always at least 10% right. Ask yourself, “How could I be wrong?” as you work with those who dismiss your ideas. Stay humble.

#### Directions:

1. Think of a real situation in your life or work where your opinion conflicted with someone else’s idea of a next step or next action and they rejected your suggestion as undoable.
2. Find three ways to agree with the yeah-but and *then* add a comment or question incorporating your concern.

**Example 1:** A person on your team complains that a project wasn’t brought to his attention early enough and suggests that the group doesn’t know enough to finish it successfully. He says things like, “We could, but we…” and “Had we done this, but we didn’t…” The project is nonnegotiable and the group is moving ahead.

You might say: You’re right that this should have been more clearly discussed with us earlier (agreement #1). You also have a point that the time frame in which we are asked to do this is limited (agreement #2). Also, I agree that it might not be as successful as we hoped (agreement #3). And given this isn’t going off our plate, what do you think is our next best step to move ahead with this work? (question).

**Example 2:** A colleague is unhappy with a new initiative that asks teams to emphasize process as well as product. Group members are asked to take time for check-ins and inquire about one another’s psychological health. The unhappy person does not have much experience in this area and now must lead their group. Their reaction is, “But this isn’t part of my role,” and “But I barely have enough time to do what I need to.”

You might say: “I agree with you that this shifts our focus a bit to emphasize the social emotional side of our work interactions (agreement #1). And I agree that isn’t everyone’s strong suit (agreement #2). And I agree that it is going to take us a little time to figure out how to do this (agreement #3). How might we approach learning this skill more effectively and efficiently to keep both product *and* process front and center? (question).

**Example 3:** A colleague is unhappy because the group is working remotely. They are an extrovert, and having to do much of the work on their own doesn’t align with their preferred work style.

