**Conversation Tips**

*To Help Guide Volunteers in Discussions about the Benefits of ADA Membership*

**Conversation Starters**

* Be friendly, upbeat, and enthusiastic.
* Be aware of cultural differences and use your tips from the diversity resource in trying to make contact.
* Listening carefully to information the other person is sharing with you - thoughts, opinions, facts, and feelings.
* Respond with genuine interest.
* Stay focused on finding out about and getting to know the other person. The bottom line – if you want people to find you interest in, put your interest in them!
* Pay special attention to when the other person is ready to move on and end every exchange on a graceful note.

**Persuasive Communications**

Step-by-step persuasive communication techniques to try:

1. Ask open-ended questions.
2. Try to discover common areas of interest and build rapport. This doesn’t have to feel forced. Try to extend yourself naturally.
3. Make the nonmember feel comfortable with you and the conversation. Make eye contact and state your objective briefly.
4. Give the nonmember one or two choices rather than a wide range of options when issuing an invitation for membership or contact. Make decision making simpler for the nonmember.
5. Anticipate questions and point out alternatives.
6. Use many examples and try to relate as much as possible. Consider sharing a story.
7. Use pauses frequently. Don’t be nervous. Measured pauses give the nonmember time to offer a thoughtful response.

**Listening Techniques**

The next time you have a conversation, try to remember the key words of active listening and their meanings – see if you can use one or more of the words to improve your listening skills.

* **Encourage**: keep the other person talking and convey interest.
* **Clarify:** clarify what was said and get more information.
* **Restate:** restate basic ideas and facts about the conversation in order to show you are listening and to check your interpretation of what is being said.
* **Reflect**: show that you understand how the person feels.
* **Summarize**: review progress in the conversation and establish a basis for continued discussion later.
* **Validate**: acknowledge the conversation happened and that the other person has a right to their feelings and opinions, no matter the outcome.

**Overcoming Objections**

Good listening goes hand-in-hand with objections nonmembers and nonrenews have to membership. Listening to objections and acknowledging what is being said may be a first step toward understanding and coming to a “common ground.”

**Tips for effectively overcoming objections to membership:**

1. Know your member benefits so you can clearly communicate them to nonmember who have questions. Many times, nonmembers have a perception of an issue that may not be correct.
2. Realize if a benefit is tangible or intangible. Whether tangible or intangible, see if the benefits that are valuable to you or a potential member save time or money or meet a need.
3. Emphasize this savings or value of membership in your interactions with nonmembers. A good technique to try this is to “frame” a picture in the nonmember’s mind of how membership may meet their needs, so they may see the benefits for themselves. We all want to feel a sense of pride in our investments and purchases.
4. Don’t be discouraged. Educating potential members and non-renewing members about the benefits of organized dentistry is an ongoing process.
5. Know your audience. Not everyone’s needs are the same. Be sure you have done your homework so that you can minimize objections.

**Overcoming Objections: Real- Life Scenarios**

It is helpful to anticipate the problems or concerns of a nonmember or nonrenew before your initial contact. The following examples will help you begin to focus on some potential objections to membership that may be expressed.

You may want to practice some of these situations with your colleagues prior to making contact with nonmembers or nonrenews.

**Responding to Objections**

1. **“Membership is expensive, and dues are too high.”**

*Possible Questions:*

* “Why do you feel membership is too expensive or dues are too high?”
* “Membership in (local), (state), and ADA provides excellent value for your dollars. What kinds of programs and services are you interested in?

*Possible benefit statements:*

* If they are a recent graduate, tell them about the ADA Reduced Dues Program, which can be a significant savings for them.
* Due to its strength, the ADA is able to aggressively lobby for the interests of dentists nationally and at the state and local levels.

*Possible language*

“I understand why you might think that membership is expensive/dues are too high. In fact, I once wondered the same thing myself. But then I broke down my membership dues and I realized that it was $Y per month, or $Z per week. I spend more on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ each week than I do on membership, and yet, membership offers me so many benefits, such as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

1. **“I don’t need to join to get benefits, so why pay?”**

*Possible questions:*

* “What benefits do you take advantage of?”
* “What problems or concerns do you have about your practice or situation that you feel is not being addressed? We might be able to help.”

*Possible benefit statement:*

* There’s strength in numbers. We all need to pay our fair share. The broader the base of our support, the better able we are to address issues that affect us.

*Possible language:*

*“When you say that you don’t need to join to get the benefits it sounds like you’ve already identified some of the benefits of membership. What benefits do you enjoy? What would you do if you had to reproduce that benefit on your own, without the ADA & MDA?”*

1. **“The ADA doesn’t meet my needs.”**

*Possible questions:*

* “Organized dentistry works on your behalf. What kinds of programs and services are you interested in?”

*Possible benefit statement:*

* Note: **Refer to your national, state, and local marketing brochures for specific benefits and resources.**

*Possible language:*

*“You say that the ADA doesn’t meet your needs. It sounds like you and I are looking at organized dentistry and drawing two different conclusions. I’d like you to tell me more so I can better understand your point of view – what needs would you like for organized dentistry to address?”*