Approachable Leadership®
Recognizing Gaps Tool

Power distance gaps cause major problems. But how can you tell if there is a gap? This tool helps you recognize behavior that suggests a power distance problem.

Tool in Brief
- **Physical Gaps** physical avoidance behavior can suggest a gap
- **Verbal Gaps** mitigated or indirect speech may express power distance
- **Behavioral Gaps** many times actions speak louder than words – watch for gaps between what someone says and what they do

TOOL IN PRACTICE

Use the tool to recognize signals of power distance. When you notice one use the discussion starters to help shrink the gap.

Physical Gaps
- Physical distance, turned toward an "exit"
- Avoiding eye contact, looking at ceiling
- Closed body language (arms crossed)
- Distracted, seems lost in thought
- Holding back or agitated body language

Behavioral Gaps
- Promising one thing, doing another
- No follow through or follow up
- Passive aggressive actions
- Being "too busy" or procrastinating
- "Changing mind" about importance of issue

Verbal Gaps... These are the most recognizable signals of power distance
- Watch for mitigated speech like **hints** ("I wonder if..."); **preference** ("perhaps we should..."); **question** ("do you think ___ would work?"); or **team suggestion** ("why don't we try ___?")
- Look for attempts to "sugarcoat" or downplay bad news
- Being overly polite or deferential
- Quickly deferring, backing down when rejected by someone in power

Discussion Starters... Once you notice a gap, try this to close it

"You seem uncomfortable. It's OK – I really want to know what you think."

"I'm not 100% sure what I think about this myself. Tell me what you really think."

"OK, that's what I do [name behavior] when I'm not sure if I should say something. What's up?"

"I need your help. Can you be honest and tell me exactly what you think about this?"

"I may be completely off base here, I don't know. Can you tell me what you really think?"