

# AND NOT BUT

The And Not But activity helps us to reflect on the simple words we use to communicate, and how these can impact a conversation. "But" is an interesting word in communication. It is a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it. By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. Our choice of words and responses can frame a conversation and help us to communicate more effectively.



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 2



None

Source: Adapted from multiple sources

## DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

In both planning sessions you were using the word "yes."

- How did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, but?" Now, how did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, and?"
- Did you feel the flow of the conversation change when you used "and" instead of "but?" If yes, how did it change?
- How can we change our language and framing around issues to communicate more effectively in health care?
- Where can you embed this change in your day-to-day work or activities? What's one thing you could try in the coming week?

By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. "But" often acts as a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it.

## WHAT TO DO



1. In partners, plan a vacation with one partner using only “yes, but” after each statement.
2. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting with “yes, but.” For example:
  - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
  - Partner 2: Yes, but I can’t go next week as I have a work meeting.
  - Partner 1: That’s okay – we can switch the time.
  - Partner 2: Yes, but I don’t like Hawaii.
3. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, but,” switch and repeat the exercise above using nothing but “yes, and.”
4. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting only with “yes, and.” For example:
  - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
  - Partner 2: Yes, and we are going to go to the beach every day.
  - Partner 1: Yes, and we are going to go snorkelling.
5. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, and”, debrief on the language used and how it felt using “and” versus “but.”