

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.

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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

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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?"