



Northeastern University

Center for Atypical Language Interpreting

Unfolding Scenario 7: Employment Training Setting

Sample Interpreter Responses and Reflections

Transcript*

This is an interpreting scenario in an employment setting involving job training. For this assignment, two hearing interpreters have been assigned to team interpret a new employee training. The two interpreters know each other and have worked together in multiple other settings. They have a good working relationship. They were given this assignment by an interpreting referral center they both work for as freelance interpreters.

The consumer in this scenario is a 42 year old Deaf male with low vision and mental health problems. With the help of a VR counselor, this consumer has recently relocated to a new city to take a new job. The first week on the job involves his participation in an orientation and training program for new employees. In the following video clip, you will see a Deaf consumer who has similar characteristics as the Deaf male in this scenario. He is being interviewed by a Deaf interpreter. This will help you to visualize the type of Deaf consumer for whom the Deaf-hearing interpreting team will interpret.

CLIP OF DEAF CONSUMER

Next are a series of decision points associated with this assignment. As with any interpreting assignment, different issues or demands arise that require the interpreter to make decisions using sound judgement and discretion associated with an ethical framework. There will be a total of six such decision points in this scenario. You will see a slide that alerts you that a decision point will follow. Watch the explanation of what happens. Then, there will be a pause for you to videotape and upload your two-minute response. There are two parts to your response—what you would do and why. When you discuss the why, include information about the ethical principle or value that guides your decision. For example, maybe your decision is guided by an ethical principle involving respect for consumers, or respect for a colleague, or confidentiality, or message accuracy and accessibility, or informing the consumers when some adjustment to the communication process needs to change, or some other ethical value. Be sure to discuss what principle or value is guiding your decision. So again, you will videotape and upload your two-minute response in ASL. Be sure to include the two parts—what you would do and why. And

*Note: This translation was not created by the original presenter. It was created after the presentation was finalized and is intended to provide an additional way to access the information.

remember, part of the why includes information about what ethical principle or value influenced your decision. Next you will see a slide indicating the first decision point, followed by a pause. After the pause, the next decision point will be introduced. This process will be repeated for all seven decision points. Let's begin.

Slide for Decision Point 1.

When the interpreters arrive at a job site for a week-long new employee training, the instructor of the training helpfully provides a copy of the trainee's packet for the interpreters to follow along. It includes the schedule with the breaks and other materials. After setting up seating, the Deaf employee arrives. He is exhausted and disgruntled. Having transferred from the other side of the country, he is tired of traveling, moving, and his girlfriend. He decides the set-up is wrong and demands the interpreters move into a corner where there is no room to switch interpreters or see a feed from the support interpreter. The Deaf employee's suggestion conveniently positions the "off" interpreter to easily chat with the Deaf employee. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

DI Sample Response:

First, I would like to acknowledge the consumer's feelings. It's completely understandable that he wants to chitchat with the interpreters, since he's just moved to a new area and doesn't know anyone. I would politely decline, explaining that my team and I are in this space to work, to interpret. We can't just chat to him instead. I would ask if we could move back to the original location we had chosen, because it would be most amenable to interpreting. We know this Deaf man has limited vision, so we would ideally seat the interpreters side by side in front of him. That way if I miss anything in my interpretation, the other interpreter is easily in his sightline to be able to feed me or provide that information without him needing to look away. I would explain that to him, saying that trying to interpret from his preferred spot will cause a lot of stress and extra effort for us.

The CPC speaks to this when it references professionalism as a part of our role. Respect for Consumers dictates that we honor the consumer's preferences as much as we can while prioritizing effective communication and meeting of his needs.

HI Sample Response:

This situation has several competing demands. The CPC tells us that we need to be thoughtful about interpreter placement, including whether the interpreters sit or stand, to maximize the consumer's experience. In this case, the interpreters and the consumer completely disagree about where best placement would be.

Respect for Consumers' needs is a primary tenet of the CPC. However, here the consumer "needs" to chitchat with the interpreters, while the instructor needs him to pay attention to the training course. These needs are at odds with each other. In this moment, the interpreters could explain to the consumer that the location he prefers for placement isn't conducive to interpreting

well – “if we sit back here we won’t be able to do our jobs and help you understand the training, plus there isn’t space for the off interpreter to sit next to you so the on interpreter can see them for feeds.” So it’s an option to engage the Deaf consumer in the reasons why his preferred placement isn’t workable for us and see how he responds. We can negotiate to try to come up with a solution that would allow us to provide services, following the CPC; providing good service is also a primary tenet.

Slide for Decision Point 2.

The training begins with a dozen employees. Before the instructor finishes the first section, the Deaf employee interrupts to ask when the break will come so he can smoke. Finding that there is another hour or more of material to cover before the first break, the Deaf employee insists that people need breaks. The instructor agrees with having breaks, but refuses to budge from the pre-printed schedule; the training is set into sections or modules with different instructors depending on the module. The Deaf employee, displeased for not getting his way, proceeds to sulk while the rest of the class moves on. Sulking doesn’t last long as he starts swearing about the training. He uses swearing that is inappropriate--particularly for the job-training setting of a new employee. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

DI Sample Response:

We’re all familiar with the classic line in any interpreting situation: “it depends.” It can be a frustrating answer. Here, my question would be the nature of the swearing. Is the consumer muttering to himself, or signing large enough that it’s clear he intends to be saying these things to the group? We can explicitly ask whether he’s intending for us to interpret what he’s saying or not. My role and responsibility works in both directions, of course; I am just as bound to interpret what he says to the hearing folks as I am what they say to him. So if he continues to comment, I would eventually start interpreting what he was saying to the room. It’s vital that I stay in my role, regardless of the content.

HI Sample Response:

I think it’d be important for the interpreter to consider the Deaf consumer’s intent here. His intent will affect my decision. The CPC tells us we must render the speaker’s message faithfully, which would indicate merely interpreting what he’s saying to the room, but it also prioritizes Respect for Consumers, so is his intent to say these things to everyone? I wouldn’t want to just interpret his words without including the intent behind them. I could clarify with the consumer whether he’s expecting me to interpret what he’s saying and see what his answer is. If he says yes, then it would be my job to do exactly that. If instead he says, “no, I don’t want that,” then I wouldn’t. That would be the way to Respect him and his intent. As a result of my question, he might realize what he’s doing and keep it more to himself. Or not. But it’s most important that the interpreter understand the intent of the swearing before making a decision about whether or how to interpret it.

Slide for Decision Point 3.

Realizing that nothing is getting accomplished, the Deaf employee turns to the support interpreter and attempts to chat. The interpreter explains that she is focused on teaming with her colleague, but he continues. He tells the interpreter the meeting is dull and regales her with stories about his life. His girlfriend, that he brought with him, was being a nag all weekend, so last night he kicked her out. When the interpreter offers to interpret his comments, he repeatedly tells her not to interpret and asks about what she did last weekend. The interpreter makes every effort to ignore him and remain on task, but he is very insistent. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

DI Sample Response:

The exposition for this scenario includes the fact that this Deaf consumer has mental health problems. That might be an important contributing factor in my decision. I would start by reiterating to him that I'm in this room to interpret, not to socialize, and that that's my job. I would explain that I was brought here because the consumer needs the information the hearing people are presenting, so if I spent the day chitchatting with him instead, I wouldn't be doing my job. I have a role here as a professional, and my responsibility is to maintain that role. Continuing to interpret would honor both Respect for Consumers and Respect for Colleagues.

If the consumer was insistent and kept trying to initiate conversation, I would shift my eye contact from him to my team, and focus all of my attention on ensuring communication of the interpreted content was smooth and effective.

HI Sample Response:

This decision point has competing demands also. The CPC says we must Respect Colleagues; in this case my team interpreter is trying to work while the consumer is trying to converse with me. If I divert my attention away from her to listen to him, I'm not doing my job of supporting her as the off interpreter. At the same time, if the consumer isn't paying attention, my team may not actually need the support. The superseding principle is that my job as the interpreter is to facilitate communication. While the Deaf consumer seems uninterested in the workshop and not invested in our interpreting it, my other consumer is the hearing presenter. My job is to relay the information they are providing, whether or not the Deaf consumer is interested or listening. So their goals are at odds, and the interpreter would need to choose which consumer to attend to: do I Respect the Deaf Consumer by participating in the chitchat, or the hearing consumer by continuing to interpret the training?

I think it's also helpful to zoom out a bit. The goal of that setting, that environment, is the training. It seems like Respect for the overarching goal of the setting should also be a consideration. Again, that's the training. So the interpreter could reiterate to the Deaf consumer as many times as necessary that we need to keep interpreting and focus on our job, or potentially

move to a different spot in the room where they can continue to support the on interpreter and not be as physically available to the Deaf consumer.

Slide for Decision Point 4

During a break, the Deaf employee asks permission of his new supervisor to use a company phone to make a long-distance call about a pay issue from his old job location. Very concerned that he didn't get his pay check on Friday and has bills to care for with the move, he wants to be sure that his transfer signing bonus will also arrive soon. The supervisor, seeming displeased, grudgingly agrees to allow a short business related phone call in the privacy of his office during the training break. Instead of calling immediately, the Deaf employee disappears. Just when the training is about to restart, the Deaf employee returns and calls one of the interpreters out to go to make his phone call. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

DI Sample Response:

The Deaf man has every right to roam around during the break and not follow the rules; that's entirely up to him. It's exactly the same as it is for hearing people attending a meeting – they can be late, and so can he. My answer here would depend on the situation. If he was in the hall when class was restarting and couldn't see people coming back to order, I would go out just to let him know things were starting back up. It would still be entirely his decision as to what to do with that information. I would empower him to make his own decisions; he is his own person in this scenario, and I'm just here to facilitate communication. If he decides to go somewhere else, that's up to him. I stay in my role as a professional, modeling Respect for Consumers.

HI Sample Response:

I think it would be pretty easy in this moment for an interpreter to automatically say, “No, the break's over, we have to go back in” – which is an option – but the teacher has already given him permission to make the call and he seems ready to do it, so it seems like an interpreter following the CPC would go with him; the consumer's needs have changed, but our mandate to meet them has not. If the teacher said it's okay and he wants to do it now, I would go along. The teacher can decide whether to let him miss the next section of the training, or chase after and call him back in later. That's the teacher's decision; he's already approved of the trainee making the call, so I think we go, in service of meeting his current need.

Slide for Decision Point 5

The interpreter accompanies the Deaf consumer to the supervisor's office to interpret the phone call. He places the long-distance call to his mother from the manager's office. They discuss her balancing his check-book, not getting the paycheck Friday and other moving concerns. The call goes on and on. The supervisor shows up and requests that the call be immediately terminated and the Deaf employee return to the training. The Deaf employee states he is wrapping up and the supervisor leaves. But several minutes go by and the call is not yet finished. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

DI Sample Response:

Just like the decision point before, this is entirely at the Deaf person's discretion. He decides what he wants to do; my role is to continue to interpret, including any environmental information. If we are aware of people walking down the hall, or the other students returning from break, or if we can hear the training beginning from the other room, we continue to interpret and he decides what to do with that information. If he prefers to keep talking to his mother, nothing changes until he decides something different. Our responsibility is clear: Respect for Consumers means this man has agency to do what he wants. He can stay on the phone and flout the rules, or choose to follow them, just like his hearing peers.

HI Sample Response:

Here the Deaf man should end the call and go back to the training, and the teacher has been in to say so. Interpreting that exchange is not the problem, and it's clear from his response – “one minute, almost done, I'll be there soon” – that he understood what the teacher was saying. So we know that our interpretation was clear.

Again, the CPC tells us to monitor the consumer's needs and meet them as they evolve, so in this moment that means continuing to interpret the call. But the teacher, the hearing consumer, also has needs. He needs the Deaf man and the interpreters back in the training. Plus, again, it would be really easy for the interpreter to step out of role and tell the Deaf man he needs to hurry and get back, but that would clearly be sharing a personal opinion and offering advice, which the CPC forbids. So the interpreter could just keep going, interpreting the phone call as his current communication need. If the teacher still wants him back in the room, he can come back in to call him back. We leave the management of the situation to the teacher. But the interpreter should just keep interpreting the phone call.

Slide for Decision Point 6.

Both interpreters are frustrated by the Deaf consumer's behavior, but continue to interpret the job training. At the end of the day, the Deaf consumer thanks both of the interpreters and says how much he looks forward to chatting with them the rest of the week since he doesn't have any friends here in this new area. He wants to trade numbers and get a cocktail after, which both interpreters decline. The interpreters feel very conflicted about whether they want to continue interpreting the assignment. What could/should the interpreters do and why?

DI Sample Response:

First, I would congratulate this gentleman for having relocated for a new job. As interpreters, we have a responsibility to share local community resources and services, so maybe there's a Deaf school campus nearby or an ASL Coffee Meet-up, Deaf club or ASL organization – maybe an ASL club at a local college – where he could go to meet people. My role dictates that I'm not allowed to socialize and drink with my consumers, so I would tell him that I need to stay professional and keep to my role.

In terms of the second part, my feeling uneasy about finishing out the rest of this weeklong assignment, my answer would depend on some details. Are there plenty of local interpreters available at the last minute to sub me out for the rest of the week? If not, I would do some reflection about my feelings, to assess whether I could let today's frustration go and just interpret neutrally for the remaining days. If I think I can, then it would be alright to stay on. If instead I feel like the distraction and irritation is too much, and I wouldn't be able to separate my personal feelings from the work at hand, it would be better for me to withdraw from the assignment and let the agency know I can't continue due to a personal conflict. The agency can take it from there. Possibly another interpreter with a different week-long assignment could swap places with me.

HI Sample Response:

Interpreters have to be able to assess what controls they have, in response to particular demands. This Deaf consumer is challenging; does the interpreter have the controls they need to navigate working with him? If they feel like they can get through the rest of the week, the CPC tenet about Business Practices tells us that it's important for interpreters to honor their commitments. You can't just back out of a job because you don't like it. That's not okay. You need to honor your commitments, so if you've committed to interpreting this workshop with this consumer for a week, you may need to stay.

At the same time, that same tenet makes exceptions if the interpreter feels unsafe or that the consumer is dangerous. In that case, the interpreter is allowed to withdraw. But here, the consumer isn't dangerous; he's just very interpersonally challenging. Really tough. If the interpreters have the right set of controls and can get through the week relatively unscathed, they should remain and do the rest of the job.

Reflections on Sample Responses:

DI: I'm glad we have this chance to sit down and talk.

HI: Me too! I'm really looking forward to this discussion.

DI: So, we're talking about Scenario #7, the job training. Shall we begin?

HI: Sure. I have a question. This scenario had six different decision points. Which of them felt most challenging to you?

DI: Honestly, the first one. We've only just arrived, and before we even have a chance to meet this consumer or get a sense of what it will be like to work with him, there's already a problem. It feels like the way we choose to respond in that moment will set the tone for the rest of the week. Sometimes we have to be diplomatic in order to find a happy medium. I know inside I'm positive I don't want to be distracted from supporting my team to chitchat with this guy, but I recognize his desire and need for connection. He's just moved to a new city, surrounded by new

people, and he finally sees people who can sign! If we reject him outright, it will be very hurtful and could ruin the rest of the day. But if instead, I'm really accommodating and overly polite, his attitude might change and we could have a pleasant day together. So it's a balancing act. We need to do what we need to do, but in a way that's both firm and nice. That's the hard part for me.

After that, I feel like we'll have a good sense of this consumer, and our reactions to any other situations that come up with him will be more in line with that information. But it's hard in the beginning when we don't know each other yet.

HI: For me it was #3, I think that's the right number, when the man keeps trying to get the off interpreter's attention to start a conversation. That one is hard for me, for the same reasons you were just mentioning. I don't want to dismiss his need for connection or make him feel bad. At the same time, if we did engage in side conversations, it would be really distracting for the other workshop participants and instructor. And the consumer wouldn't get the training information he's there for. So there's a myriad of reasons why the answer is no, but *how* we say no -clearly and permanently - is the question. Because it seems like he isn't taking no for an answer. At this point we've told him we can't and explained why, and he's persisting. So that one is really challenging for me. How to, like, very clearly bar any further chitchat without insulting him. For me that was a big challenge.

DI: Right. As a Deaf person, I'm very familiar with other Deaf people just wanting to enjoy conversation in ASL. It's cultural; Deaf people want to know each other. Sometimes job training can feel cold and impersonal, that you're just supposed to come in and sit in your seat and stare straight ahead at the instructor until you're dismissed, and that's in direct conflict with Deaf culture norms. I get that. At the same time, there may need to be some concessions since this Deaf man needs to work in this hearing environment. His cultural values may not necessarily apply here.

HI: Also, though, he just moved to town, and based on what else we know, it seems like the move has been stressful and he's still getting settled. So that's another factor, and it seems like he also has some mental health issues. So how do we support that constellation of realities while honoring the fact that he needs this training information to do his new job? It's a hard one.

DI: I agree! It's not a fun place to be in.

HI: Yeah. So there were six decision points. Were there any that you'd like to change, if you could go back? Any answers you gave that you're not satisfied with? If yes, can you tell us why, and if no, can you explain that too?

DI: I do have one response I'm not happy with. I didn't fully think it through. It was #1. I responded based on my initial reaction, but I realize now that I denied him his ability to participate in the process. In my response, I told him what we, as interpreters, need and what we needed to do. *I told him.* That's not how it should be; we should be working together to create a

circumstance that works for everyone. So maybe we could negotiate more, be more flexible. So I realized that I need to be more mindful that he may have a good and valid reason for his preferred set-up, and I can try to get him to explain it to me. If I still disagree and think our initial set-up is best, even if the final answer doesn't change, he's now had an opportunity to be a part of the process. So that's one.

There was also an answer I'm really happy with: the last one, #6. I remember when I moved into a new, really small community, as a Deaf person. I was brand new in town. The first time I met an interpreter, I was thrilled. I had a local family, but no friends yet. So when I met this interpreter, I did exactly the same things the man in our scenario did: I asked a million questions and that interpreter gave me resources and information about where I could find what I was looking for. Community events, Deaf clubs, the local Facebook page. With that information, I could make my own steps into the community and finally start to make connections. I'm really grateful to that interpreter and I bring that experience into my work now. When this man reaches out for connection with me, I can redirect him towards the right resources. Interpreters can forget that sometimes we know more than Deaf people about what's out there, because we are in and out of so many people's lives every day. Deaf people don't often have that same opportunity.

HI: I liked that part in your answer. I was like, "oh, right, that's a good point." But I think some people might say you went over the line, that the resources you told him about constitute sharing your opinion, or that because you learned about those resources in other jobs, you would be prohibited from sharing them. What do you think about that?

DI: It's interesting you bring that up, because I'm constantly aware of being pulled in two directions as someone who's an interpreter and also a Deaf person. Sometimes I learn things on the job that I already knew, because I'm Deaf. Sometimes it's the other way, that I learn things as a Deaf person that I already knew as an interpreter. And sometimes I can't remember where I learned something. I feel like at the end of the day, if the information is readily and publicly available, if it's posted physically or virtually somewhere that the general community knows about it, it stops belonging to the setting where I learned it. It would be different if it was like, an ASL class being offered by a specific company, that you only knew about because you interpreted it. That would feel inappropriate to share. But if there were a local community college with an excellent ASL program with a great reputation, and everyone in town knew about it, and knew who worked there, insisting on a boundary in that case feels trickier. And for me, the answer is intuitive and clear. If people already know, it's okay to share. Like when a movie theater does open captioned showings, they typically market it pretty aggressively. But if it was less well-known information, I would hold back from sharing it.

HI: In terms of confidentiality, maybe the question is, if you share that resource does it compromise anyone's right to confidentiality. If it does, then you hold back. Right? That's kind of the relationship?

DI: Right. If the person I'm sharing it with could trace it back from me to the place where I learned about it, like "oh, that interpreter works in healthcare, therefore it must be..." then I wouldn't share it. If there's no way for the person I'm sharing with to trace the information any further than me, it's okay to share.

HI: Which of the six decision points do you feel had the most impact on the Deaf consumer? And which had the most impact on the hearing person?

DI: I have two answers for that. To begin with, the whole situation is full of impacts. Each decision point has impacts on both consumers, really. But also, the decision point about whether or not to interpret the Deaf consumer's phone call would have a far-reaching impact. Our decision can't help but reveal whose side we're on. If we decide to end the call because the supervisor said so, we have forcibly taken away the Deaf man's agency and ability to decide for himself what he does. That will have a cascading impact, if he takes it to mean that interpreters will decide and do things for him; in the future, he might expect it. But if we continue interpreting the call despite what the supervisor said, he gets the impression that he can make his own decisions. That's enormously impactful.

HI: Yeah, I agree. One thing I was thinking that I didn't really mention during any of my responses was the impact on the Deaf employee from the fact that he isn't getting the training information being taught. I think it's an important factor in this, that he misses so much of the content. It could impact his future ability to do his job, and it impacts the hearing instructor, too, who seems to be unaware that the Deaf employee is missing so much. I think the fact that he's missing important information impacts them both. Also, based on what we know, it doesn't seem like the interpreter is making sure the instructor is somehow aware of this Deaf consumer's unique communication and needs. Does the instructor know this man and his needs? Probably not. Or, maybe he does, because there's a history we don't know; this man transferred into this job, so maybe the instructor could have known but somehow didn't get the information. Is that important? We don't know. But I keep thinking about the impact of the Deaf employee not getting the information he needs to do his job. I think it's an important piece and I never mentioned it in my responses.

DI: I agree with you. I feel the same way, because I failed to mention the initial disagreement about interpreter placement with the presenter. I feel like by only engaging with the Deaf consumer and making sure my own needs were met, it was almost like I cleaned it up and from the presenter's perspective it must have looked like, "oh wow, the interpreters sure are busy, look at that lively conversation," but it was actually us disagreeing and negotiating in real time. And it's possible that because we didn't loop him in, in a year's time the Deaf employee will be disciplined in his performance review because of ongoing issues, when it could have all been nipped in the bud the first day if the presenter was aware. Right? So we have to keep in mind that when we're solving problems as they arise, we also have to communicate with the hearing

consumers about what's happening. So that they're aware of the consumer's needs that need to be addressed.

HI: What do you think would be the best way to tell the presenter about what's going on? After the training, or at that moment? What are you picturing as the most appropriate way to loop them in?

DI: I might start with the supervisor, because the employee spoke with them after making the call, and say, "Just so you're aware, there have been a number of items today that needed resolution and that have made our job as interpreters more challenging than typical." The introduction to this scenario mentioned that this man has mental health problems, so I imagine he was placed in this job by a Vocational Rehab counselor. That means my assumption – and we know it's dangerous to assume – is that the supervisor is already aware of the mental health aspect, and that his employee may have needs that differ from the average hire or hearing worker. He may benefit from a reminder that, yes, this employee has more needs. But you're right, we have to consider that too.

HI: How did the six decisions you made today affect your work as an interpreter? How will this exercise affect your work going forward?

DI: Well, the question just a second ago helped point out that I neglected to consider some things. I take that to heart. In the moment, I was just focused on the biggest, most obvious problem, and seemingly smaller problems got pushed to the side. Sometimes the "smaller" problem is actually more important than the so-called "biggest" one. So it reminds me again to keep the big picture going, monitoring communication as a whole, keeping an eye on the needs of the consumer and situation as they evolve. I feel like a lot of my decisions today were because I was aware that the consumer is Deaf and also has limited vision and mental health issues. My decisions will impact his experience most immediately. His relationship with me, his expectations of me, so if tomorrow I show up to work and decide to do something different, he will be thrown off. "That's not what you said yesterday." So I have to simultaneously be attending to the micro moments while staying aware of the big picture, and making sure my decisions serve both.

HI: For me, I also realize I haven't looped in the instructor. It's possible that if I let him know what's been going on, he'll say, "Oh yeah, that's typical for him. Don't worry about it." So maybe we're spending time and energy trying to "fix" this when we don't need to be. The communication between us and the presenter, in addition to between the presenter and the employee, is also important. So like you said, we can't get so mired in the immediate issue that we forget about that. Talking to the presenter might be the most important part.

DI: Right. I'm assuming – there's that word again – that the issue in front of me is the most pressing and important, but the other folks in the room might disagree with me. You're right, that's a good point. Again, attend to what's happening between us and the consumer, but

remember to keep the hearing folks in the loop so we can figure out what to do as a team. Also, the prompt says there's a team of interpreters, but I'm also realizing right now that I never mentioned conferring with my team in any of my decisions either. I just made decisions for myself, over and over. That's a big takeaway.

HI: Do any of the decisions you made today seem like something you'll apply to your work going forward?

DI: Any of the six could apply, really. Deaf people often want to dictate where the interpreters are placed. They often want to abandon the subject matter to chitchat instead. They often want to go out and socialize with interpreters, because the community is so small. So all of them can apply to any job I might have, be it high-level or less consequential, something ongoing or a one-off. It's all applicable, absolutely.

HI: Let me ask you this. As a Deaf person who is also an interpreter, do you sometimes work with people and think, "Wow, this person is so cool, I'd love to hang out socially with them, but I can't"? Does that feel like a conflict for you?

DI: Sadly, I have to admit, no. Because before I meet a new person in any context, I spend time researching them, and if it seems like they might need a CDI in the future, I make decisions about how to interact with them. I might keep things surface-level deliberately or choose to engage and start a relationship, but if I do the latter that means I anticipate having to turn down work with them. Because that would be a conflict of interest. So it's sad to admit but interpreters don't have the same benefit; a Deaf interpreter can pick and choose which Deaf people to associate with, but hearing interpreters can't because they need to engage with the community as a whole. So that's an interesting challenge you and I face, in different ways.

HI: You're right; the boundaries can be kind of a moving target. And you're right that I can't refuse to associate with anyone from the community that I might one day have the opportunity to work with, because that's everyone, and socializing is an important part of community membership, so there needs to be a balance, and a constant negotiation of those boundaries.

DI: There have been a rare few times in my career that I worked with someone as a consumer, and then the work ended and time passed, and then our paths crossed again later as they were a friend of a friend of a friend, or someone's cousin in an equally roundabout way. So we might become friends, but it depends entirely on that person's ability to separate my past professional work as their interpreter with our friendship now. If they can do that, I can be friends with them, but if they can't keep that professional versus personal distinction, then I can't pursue the friendship.

HI: How do you know whether or not they can separate the two?

DI: I'll give you some examples. If they're like, "Oh wow, I know you, remember last week when you interpreted my such and such?" That's an automatic tell that they still see me as the

interpreter, even in a setting where I'm just there as a member of the community. That signals to me that if I pursued a friendship with them, they would keep doing it and it would be a chronic issue. That's a red flag, so I would back off. But if instead we have a nice social conversation and they never mention interpreting in the slightest, that's a green flag, because it means they see and respect the boundary. Sometimes the signals are less clear, so I can explicitly say, "I'm not here as an interpreter right now, so I can't get into that." If the person persists, asking if I remember x, y or z, I have a canned response where I say, "Gosh, I work with so many Deaf consumers; I can't remember all of them." Sometimes that's all the person needs to drop it. Then we might be able to move on. But if they won't let it go, and keeps trying to prompt me with more details, that's a clear indicator that I need to back off.

HI: Our field has promulgated some best practices. How does that decision align with those?

DI: The field of interpreting in this day and age is hyperfocused on empowering the Deaf consumer to be on par with hearing people. So it's no longer a matter of whose side the interpreter is on; we just have equal consumers. So any decision I make, I have that top of mind, and that means I can defend my decisions. Regardless of the situation, is the Deaf consumer still being treated like a person, treated with respect, and given full autonomy? If the answer to all three is yes, then I feel confident that my decision aligns with best practices. I always emphasize that, and it serves me well.

HI: What about situations where you feel like the Deaf person's autonomy is compromised, and they're not in a position to make good decisions? Where do you feel an additional responsibility or burden to support them, or give them additional support, rather than just conferring that autonomy and considering it done? Has that happened to you before?

DI: Sure. Sometimes there's a clash of cultures. For example, in this scenario, the Deaf consumer is swearing – behaving inappropriately for the context, a public employment training. So as a Deaf person who is considered to participate in mainstream hearing culture, I would wince internally – I know that swearing breaks hearing norms in that setting and would not be acceptable. Deaf people may be willing to tolerate more in the same situation, so I may have internal bias around that and not register that it will offend others in the room. So sometimes I have to check my own biases, and remember that it's not about me – it's about them, the Deaf and hearing people in the room having this interaction, and I'm just there to facilitate communication between their voices and their hands, and that's all.

HI: So does that mean that you ensure that your consumers are understanding each other and beyond that, you trust them to handle whatever happens as a result?

DI: Pretty much, yes. Because if I don't interrupt the Deaf consumer's decisions, they may make bad choices but then they'll learn from it. If I'm constantly – and secretly – fixing everything, they won't know and the next time it happens in a different circumstance or with a different

interpreter and the result is different, they won't know why. If things go wrong because of their decision, they won't have had the opportunity to learn from it.

HI: Did you learn anything new about yourself or your decision-making by participating in this exercise?

DI: Definitely! As I just shared, that takeaway about focusing on the immediate "biggest" problem to the neglect of the other "smaller" problems, like informing the instructor that the Deaf consumer isn't paying attention, or behaving inappropriately, I'm wondering now how many times I haven't noticed that I was doing that and how many things have I missed? Because seemingly inconsequential things can accumulate over time and become enormous issues. So I need to remember to monitor on an individual decision level, and also keep an eye on the big picture. I can use a categorical approach to interpreting; addressing the largest problem in the room on a superficial level, on a rolling basis as they happen, versus addressing the issue as a whole and resolving it in its entirety before moving on to the next, to address in its entirety.

I sometimes feel like I instinctually want to react in the moment, and that once I've reacted, I feel like the moment is gone and we can move on, but I need to remember that each action and decision has ripple effects. That each decision has consequences; is there something in the consequence that needs to be fixed? If so, we fix it, and if it's truly resolved without further consequences, then we can move on, but not before. That's been a big takeaway for me today.

HI: I feel the same way. I want all of my consumers to understand what the other is saying, and then a particular situation might not happen. That will affect my decision making. Also, that final decision point about providing local community resources, that's not something I had thought of but it's very important for this particular guy. He obviously needs support and social connection. So my takeaway is remembering that I have information about resources from my broader community knowledge, and I can share that with him. I will change that going forward, so that he gets better support in his new community.

DI: That's a great thing to keep in mind.

HI: Now, if you think back to all of the decisions you made today, are there any that you would do differently?

DI: Maybe the very first one, where he's asking for a different interpreter placement. I could just agree, and do what he's asking; after all, he is the consumer, and he can decide what he wants. If he wants to sit in a way that means he can chitchat with the off interpreter, I could just do it.

HI: Okay, so what would be the pros and cons of just doing it?

DI: Well, the pros are that the Deaf man feels like his opinion matters, that it's valued, and that his input is taken seriously and respected. Cons would be that my team might be taken aback because now they're left without support, and when it's my turn to be on now I will have no support. That's a huge amount of work for one interpreter to do, because it would essentially set

us up as if we had no team at all. The instructor might notice that one interpreter is working and the consumer and other interpreter aren't attending at all. It might be really chaotic and distracting for them.

HI: OK, if that happened, what's the next demand that you foresee?

DI: I imagine the presenter might interrupt the training to find out what's going on. I could simply say, "This is what the Deaf employee wanted, and we have a professional responsibility to respect their wishes." Communication is still technically happening; it's not the best case scenario, but this is what he wanted. The presenter will also notice that the employee isn't paying attention.

HI: So maybe that's the better decision! Maybe that's a better choice, rather than trying to negotiate with the employee to ensure he will pay attention. Who knows?

DI: Better or worse, who can say, but definitely every action causes cascading ripple effects, and that will lead to a different set of consequences. I would be curious where that would go.

HI: Right. Well, okay, thank you for sitting down with me. It was nice to spend some time hashing this out together.

HI: You too, thank you.

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