



**Phrases that might help when we 'fumble' for what to say -**

- adapted excerpts from *The Leader Phrase Book* by Patrick Alain

*When someone seems to be picking a fight* - "You seem upset. What can I do to help remedy the situation?"

*When you disagree* - "I understand the point you are making and..." "I get what you are saying and..." "I understand how you see it, but I see it differently..."

*To express an opinion* - "From my perspective..." "I could be wrong, but..." "I'm not sure, but I think..."

*To ask for an opinion* - "I'd love to get your take on..." "What's your view of the situation?" "What do you think about?"

*To get more information* - "Can you elaborate on your position?" "Could you tell me more?" "Could you shed some light on...?"

*To clarify a point* - "Let me say it another way..." "Let me attempt to rephrase this..." "Let's try to clarify this..."

*To express doubts* - "I'm not positive, but I think..." "I'm having second thoughts about..." "It seems like something is missing, but I can't quite put my finger on it." "There are some aspects I'm just not sure of."

*To address a difference of opinion* - "You seem to know a lot about this. Tell me more." "That's not my understanding of this issue." "How can we reach common ground?"

*When you don't want to answer a question* - "There is more than one way to look at this." "I don't know enough to give a definitive answer." "There are no simple explanations." "I don't have enough information..." "I need more time..."

*To refocus a discussion* - "As I recall, the purpose of our meeting is..." "Let's take a few steps back to our original discussion..."

*To defer a conversation* - "Let's plan a time to address this..." "This deserves some serious thought; can we revisit it when we know more?" "Can we talk about this more when I've done my homework?"

*To postpone a decision* - "Can we take some time and think further about what we want to accomplish?"

*To slow things down* - "I need to slow down and think this through." "Can we delay a bit for the purpose of understanding better?" "This is important. I need more time to give it the attention it deserves."

*To intercede in a conflict between two people* - "Let's stay constructive." "Let's go over the points again."  
"Let's take a breather and reconvene."

*To get past a misunderstanding* - "This is a tough one... Can we go over it again?" "We may be misunderstanding one another. Can we each explain our views in another way?" "I value our relationship. We're having a hard time with this. Can we go over details again?"

*To respond to an offensive statement* - "I find those words offensive." "Those words upset me."

*To respond to condescension* - "I feel hurt by your remarks. Help me understand where you're coming from."  
"I'm not sure how to take your comment; please explain your intent."

*When someone interrupts you* - "Sorry, I have one last point to make."

*When someone criticizes you* - "That must have been hard to say; I appreciate your honesty." "I will take that in to consideration."

*When someone changes the subject* - "Good point, we'll get back to that in a second." "Let's get back to the subject at hand."

*To open up a topic for debate* - "Can we bat some ideas around for a moment?" "I'd love to have your take on..."

*To advise or make suggestions* - "Would you be willing to hear my thoughts?" "I have a couple of thoughts on this. Would you be willing to hear them?"

*To emphasize a point* - "I cannot stress enough how critical this is." "Let me make this point even more clear."  
"Let me put it another way."

*To call for a compromise* - "We both want what's best. How can we make that happen?" "I'd really like to come to a mutual understanding."

*To address a problem* - "There must be a way out of this sticky situation. Let's find it." "Can we agree to get to the heart of this issue?" "Can we work together to get out of this mess?" "We sure have a dilemma. Discussing our options may help."

*To express a complaint* - "I want to give you an opportunity to address my concerns."

*To apologize for a wrong-doing* - "I'm sorry I... I want to make things right by..."