

What is a Difficult Conversation?



Conversations you are not holding or not holding well that involve high stakes, emotions or opinions.

What Makes A Conversation Difficult?

- Conflict generally involves people having **different** beliefs, personalities, needs, or preferences.
- Conflict generally involves people who make decisions that affect the **interests** of others.
- Conflict arises when resources are **limited** .
- Conflict is sometimes a byproduct of conflicting **objectives** i.e. 1) deliver a quality product and 2) Get the job done quickly and under budget.
- Conflict arises when two groups or individuals **interfere** in each other's achievement of goals.
- Not everyone views conflict in the same way. Some find it energizing and **stimulating** while others find it distracting and **uncomfortable**

How Conflict Affects People

In Negative Ways

- **Immobilize** decision making and result in unworkable compromises
- Create **mistrust**
- **Reduce** job satisfaction and thus impair performance.
- Consume a lot of **time & energy** and result in lost opportunity.

In Positive Ways

- Deepen **relationships**
- **Energize** individuals and groups to perform better.
- Increase the **creativity** of group decision making.
- Be the means to make **positive** changes.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

- **Avoiding** - Neither you nor I satisfy our concerns
- **Accommodating** - I satisfy your concerns at the expense of my own
- **Competing** - I satisfy my concerns at the expense of yours –
- **Compromise** - We each give up some of our concerns in order to satisfy the other party
- **Collaborating** - Both you and I approach the conflict as a mutual problem allowing us to discover alternatives which satisfy all of our concerns

TIPS IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS

- Stay focused on issues not personalities.
- No single approach is right for all situations. Avoid sticking with a favorite.
- Remember, conflict isn't always bad.

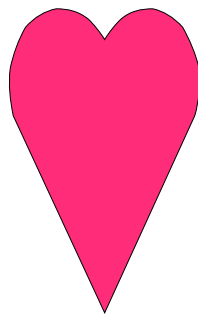
Controlling Your Emotions

- Taking the tough stand
 - Knowing when to be direct and firm
- Knowing when to be empathetic and listen
- It is knowing when to use different relationship styles
- It is the ability to manage your reactions
- It is the ability to know when to step up and face conflict rather than avoid it
- It is the ability to use your passions to motivate yourself and others

Controlling Your Emotions

- What wake do you hope to see?
 - Check in frequently with others to make sure
- Keep in mind that being in a relationship with a person close to me is more important than being right all the time
- Recognize there are multiple truths
- When your emotions are negative the more I say increases the likelihood that there will be a negative wake.....say less, listen more
- Allow space for interruptions

Start With Heart



- Start With the Right Motives
- Stay Focused
- What Do I Want For Myself?
- What Do I Want For Others?
- What Do I Want For This Relationship?
- Suckers Choice – Either/Or – The Alternative is “and”

Three Stages of the Confrontational Conversation

“If you know something must change, then know that it is you who must change it”

- Opening Statement
- Interaction
- Resolution

Three Stages of the Confrontational Conversation

Opening Statement – sixty seconds

1. Name the issue
2. Select a specific example that illustrates the behavior or situation you want changed
3. Describe your emotions about this issue
4. Clarify what is at stake
5. Identify your contribution to the problem
6. Indicate your wish to resolve the issue
7. Invite your partner to respond

Three Stages of the Confrontational Conversation

Interaction

- Inquire into your partner's views
 - Reality will most certainly be interrogated
 - Ask questions
 - Dig for full understanding
 - Don't be satisfied with what's on the surface

Three Stages of the Confrontational Conversation

Resolution

- What have we learned? Where are we now?
- Has anything been left unsaid?
- What is needed for resolution?
- How can we move forward given our new understanding?

Make an agreement and determine how you will hold each other responsible for keeping it

Controlling Your Emotions

- **Resilience** - Your ability to bounce back, to be flexible, to retain a sense of curiosity and hopefulness about the future, even in the face of adversity.
- **Outlook** - The way you view the world and your place within it; how positively or negatively you interpret life events and experiences.
- **Intentionality** - Your ability to act deliberately, “on purpose,” to say what you mean and to mean what you say.
- **Constructive Discontent** - Your ability to stay calm, focused and emotionally grounded, even in the face of disagreement or conflict.
 - Do you know your emotional triggers?

Seven Steps to Better Conversations

1. Master the courage to interrogate reality
2. Make it real
3. Be here, prepared to be nowhere else
4. Tackle your toughest challenge today
5. Obey your instincts
6. Take responsibility for your emotional wake
7. Let silence do the heavy lifting

1. Master the Courage to Interrogate Reality

- Most people want to hear the truth, even if it is unpalatable
- There is something within us that responds deeply to people that level with us
- People change and forget to tell each other. We are all changing all the time. Not only do we neglect to share this with others, we are skilled at masking it even to ourselves.

1. Master the Courage to Interrogate Reality

- *“Real conversations take time. The problem is anything else takes longer”*
- The person who can most accurately describe reality without laying blame will emerge the leader
- When you do this notice the change in the tone and outcome of your conversations
- Maybe you are contributing to the problem
- Remove the word “but” from your vocabulary and use the word “and

1. Master the Courage to Interrogate Reality

- Refers to what is actually happening on the ground versus the official tactics
- One of the challenges worth going after in any organization – is getting to ground truth
- You need to get to ground truth before you can turn anything around
- Every day companies fail because the difference between ground truth and the “official truth” is significant

2. Make it Real

1. Identify your most pressing issue
 - The issue that I most need to resolve is:
2. Clarify the issue
 - What is going on? How long? How bad?
3. Determine the current impact
4. Determine the future implications
5. Examine your personal contribution to this issue
6. Describe the ideal outcome
7. Commit to action

3. Be Here, Prepared to Be Nowhere Else

- Getting Past “How Are You?”
- “What is the most important thing you and I should be talking about?”
- Enriching the relationship: *One of the greatest gifts you can give another is the purity of your attention. Not your advice! Hold your ideas until your partner has had the opportunity to formulate their own solutions*

3. Be Here, Prepared to Be Nowhere Else

Most Common Mistakes

1. Doing most of the talking
2. Taking the problem away from someone
3. Not inquiring about feelings
4. Delivering unclear: messages, coaching and instructions
5. Canceling the meeting
6. Allowing interruptions
7. Running out of time
8. Assuming your one on ones are effective

4. Tackle Your Toughest Challenge Today

- Naming the problem – “*The problem named is the problem solved*” Pat Murray
- Holding advice - “*Burnout occurs because we have been trying to solve the same problem over and over*”

5. Obey Your Instincts

- A careful conversation is a failed conversation
- During each conversation, listen for more than content. Listen for emotion and intent as well
- Act on your instincts rather than passing them over for fear that you could be wrong or that you may offend someone
- A fundamental outcome of most communication is *misunderstanding*
- No matter what a person says, we decide in the privacy of our minds what he or she really means by it and then operate as if our interpretation is true, without checking it out

6. Take Responsibility for Your Emotional Wake

“For a leader there is no trivial comment. Something you might not even remember saying may have had a devastating impact on someone looking to you for guidance and approval. By the same token, something you said years ago may have encouraged and inspired someone who is grateful to you to this day. Everything each of us says leaves an emotional wake. Positive or negative. Our individual wakes are larger than we know.”

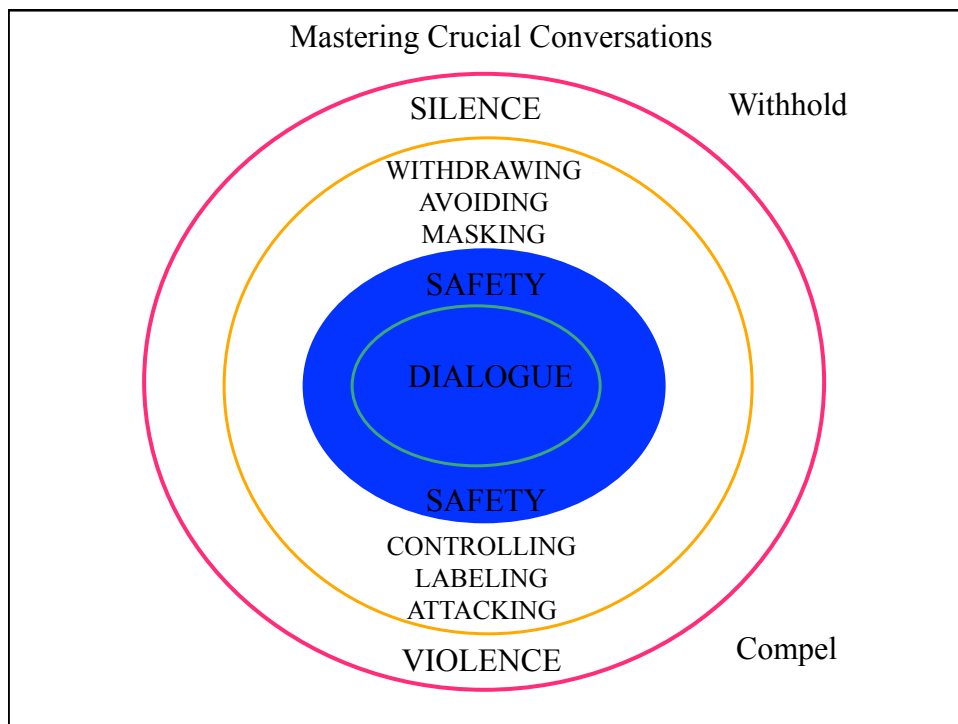
7. Let Silence do the Heavy Lifting

- Most powerful of all techniques
- How can we interrogate reality, provoke learning, tackle tough challenges, enrich relationships when we’ re involved in a talkathon?
- Allows examination of basic beliefs, paradigms before racing to solutions
- Allows everyone to participate
- Allows us to scan our head for “ground truth”

7. Let Silence do the Heavy Lifting

Signs Silence is Needed

- Interrupting by talking over someone else
- Formulating your own response while someone is talking
- Responding quickly with little or no thought
- Attempting to be clever, competent, impressive, charming etc.
- Jumping in with advice before issue clarified
- Talking in circles, nothing new emerging
- Monopolizing the airspace



One on One Debrief of Yourself

- You identified and focused on the real issue
- You didn't get sidetracked by rabbit trails
- You didn't do most of the talking
- You took him deeper and deeper into the issue until you found the core
- You maintained eye contact
- You weren't distracted by anything else in the room
- When he got emotional, you didn't rescue him
- You nodded and expressed empathy
- You didn't offer advice even when the solution seemed obvious
- You used silence powerfully
- You didn't take the conversation away from the individual

Facilitating a Team Issue Discussion

- Require that issue is well prepared before bringing to team
- Create and use an issue preparation form
- Provide written copy of issue form to team members prior to meeting
- After presentation, allow time for clarifying questions
- Move on to solutions once team members are satisfied real issue has been identified
- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak
- Wrap discussion by having everyone give a one sentence recommendation. "If I were you..."
- Ask member with the issue, "What did you hear?"
- Ask "What actions are you committed to taking and when will you take them?"
- Follow Up

“People will forget what you said.
People will even forget what you did.
But people will never forget how you
made them feel.”

- Unknown

- **Nothing we achieve in this world is
achieved alone. It is always
achieved with others helping us
along the way.**

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