

Holding Difficult Conversations

Discuss Process, Not Content

When you feel a conversation getting stuck due to conflict, get away from the content of the discussion and instead, focus on how both people are being treated and how they feel. Step out of content and talk more about process.

Pay Attention to Respect and Civility

Everyone in the workplace doesn't have to be best friends. But each person as an individual deserves respect, dignity and civility based on the commonality we share as we try to do our best in our jobs. We can be professional and contribute to the team by focusing on common goals and achieving excellence, rather than on what our differences are.

Check Out Intentions and Motives

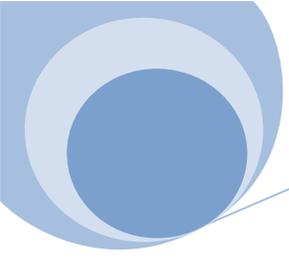
Check out your intentions in your heart before sitting down with the other person to talk. Be clear on what you really want. Are you trying to win at all costs, prove that you're right and "out-do" the other person - or are you trying to find common ground, mutual purpose and create a win-win situation for both of you. Your tone, pitch, non-verbals and words will reflect what your true intent is, so be aware of that.

Focus on "What Role am I Playing?"

Ask yourself, "to what degree am I contributing to this conflict or disagreement? What role do I play in either causing the conflict or perpetuating it?" These are very difficult questions to ask ourselves. It's much easier to look at the shortcomings of others than to look at the areas of improvement we can make in ourselves.

Rise Above the Pettiness

At times we may take small issues or differences and blow them out of proportion to the extent that to us, it becomes a critical issue relating to our deep seated core values – as if we have a moral certainty. In reality and in the grand scheme of things, it's really not worth damaging a relationship or hurting someone else over.



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Monitor Your Hot Buttons

Realize what your hot buttons are and what your natural tendency is to deal with conflict when you're in the heat of the moment. If you automatically get aggressive and abrasive, realize that and account for it. If you automatically go to avoidance and withdraw so that nothing gets resolved, be aware of that as well. You may need to calm down and wait some time before talking to the other person to gain perspective and get out of that reactionary "fight or flight" mindset.

Apologize When Necessary

If you've done something to offend the other person or if there may have been a misunderstanding, don't hesitate to apologize. This is a sign of tremendous courage and strength, not weakness.

Make it Safe – Demonstrate Respect

Make it safe for the other person by trying to find a mutual purpose or mutual interest. Get away from rigid positions. Be willing to listen to the other persons' interests, concerns and perspectives and really hear them.

Be Clear on Facts -- Be Aware of the "Stories" You Tell

Be clear on the facts before making up stories or allowing your emotions to run off on tangents. Sometimes we need to go back and challenge the stories we've made up in our heads. We can do this by making sure we have the facts right. If we realize our facts are incorrect about that person, we are then forced to change the unhealthy story about that person that was based on those incorrect facts.

"Why Might a Reasonable Person Do This?"

Give the other person the benefit of the doubt and try to ask: "Why would a reasonable, rational person be doing this?" Or even still, "If I was in their same situation and was aware of things they were aware of, might I react the same way?"