



PEDIATRIC
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THE PRACTICE SUPERVISOR

Managing Difficult Conversations

MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

COURSE OVERVIEW

We have so many interactions in the run of a day, it’s reasonable to expect that some of them are going to be difficult. Whether these are conversations that you have in person, or you manage a virtual team and need to speak with someone in another city, there are things that you can do to make these conversations go smoothly. This module will give you the tools to manage difficult conversations and get the best results possible out of them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Define frame of reference
- Establish a positive intent and a desired outcome
- Use good communication skills during a conversation
- Draft a script for a difficult conversation
- Use specific steps to carry out a difficult conversation
- Access additional resources as required
- Maintain safety in a conversation

PERSONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHOOSING TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION

CONSIDERING THE CONSEQUENCES

At times we can plan how we want a conversation to go and select some helpful phrases and questions ahead. Other times, the conversation is spontaneous, arising in the heat of the moment or a particular event. In both cases, we recommend that you take a moment to consider the potential outcomes to the conversation and whether it's got enough value for you.

For example, if someone on the bus is rude to you, and you know that you will never see them again, is it worth reacting to, or is it better to just move on with your day?

If you are a supervisor and one of your staff takes up a lot of time in meetings by talking over other people and not listening to what they say, are you going to talk with them about their behavior?

If your boss takes up a lot of time in meetings by talking over other people and not listening to what they say, are you going to talk to them about their behavior?

You must be prepared to accept the consequences of any conversation you have. This means that as a supervisor, you must manage the behavior of your subordinates, but unless you want to get fired, you probably won't have the same conversation with your boss (unless the circumstances are extraordinary).

ESTABLISHING YOUR FRAME OF REFERENCE

When difficult conversations arise, it's important to consider where you are coming from. Is the simple fact that this conversation is going to happen influencing how you feel about it? What is your perspective on the issue?

- If it's a small thing, will it stay small during the conversation and any follow up?
- If it's a big thing, do you have the ability to keep the conversation from escalating into an argument or confrontation?
- Can you step back and see the situation from the other person's perspective? What about being completely objective and seeing it from a third point of view?

A frame of reference is a way in which we judge other people. We all make judgments about people but to really get the meaning of what's going on, we need to be able to suspend those judgments and let meanings come to us unfettered. A communicator's ability to suspend their frame of reference is a critical and important skill because it can build their credibility and make them a more effective communicator.

Your frame of reference is made up of your beliefs, assumptions, values, feelings, judgments, emotions, advice, moods, thoughts, biases, and stress levels at any given moment. Because your frame of reference is so personal and so deeply embedded, it is very difficult to practice suspending it on a regular basis. We all often interpret reality from our own vantage point and react in a self-serving manner. We have to learn to take others' points of view and feelings, as well as our own, into consideration. This is what we refer to as reframing; seeing things from a different point of view.

How can we do this? Try to:

- Put others before yourself
- Check things out before jumping to conclusions, making assumptions, or reacting emotionally
- Give others the benefit of the doubt

Suspension of belief is especially appropriate when others need to be understood for their tension or stress to be defused. Think about suspending belief in these situations:

- A police officer who arrives on a violent scene where everyone has a weapon, but someone is declaring their innocence.
- A scene at work where workers are bullying a co-worker. The person who appears to be the victim, however, is a known bully.
- You put your lunch in the fridge when you arrived at work this morning, but when you look in your lunch bag, half the lunch is missing.
- You reach for the last loaf of bread in the bakery at the same time as someone else. The other person looks harried.

ESTABLISHING POSITIVE INTENT

Entering a difficult conversation is something that we do for several reasons, but the biggest one is that we are responsible for creating productive workplaces. So, it stands to reason that as a manager or supervisor, you are going to have these difficult conversations to make the workplace better for the person you are speaking with, their colleagues, your customers, and the organization overall.

When you have these conversations, it's always best to do so with what we call positive intent. Positive intent includes the idea that you have good reason for what you are saying and doing, and so do other people. It's best to come from a place of concern and providing support when you have these difficult conversations, and positive intent helps to do that. It demonstrates your belief that the other person is not being defiant – unless that later proves to be the case – and that you want to help them do better. To demonstrate your positive intent, avoid making negative assumptions and statements, and focus on the future instead of the past.

Rewrite the following messages using positive intent in a conversation.

I need that report immediately!

There's no way we are doing that!

ESTABLISHING POSITIVE INTENT

Put your personal cell phone away during work hours.

Another aspect of positive intent, which also relates to reframing, is to accept that not everyone is like you. People have strengths, and they also have limitations. You have to consider why a particular behavior is a problem. Is it a problem for you because of your perspective, or is it genuinely a problem?

Here are some things to consider in that respect:

- Sometimes as supervisors, our expectations are very high, and we can actually have higher job satisfaction for ourselves if we drop our expectations a little. For example, can we stop asking people to give us 110% all the time, since 100% is the ideal? To take that a step further, no one is capable of 100% all the time. When is the last time you had a whole week of 100% days?
- Are you worried that their behavior is making you look bad and that what they are doing is a direct reflection of your abilities as a supervisor? If so, then perhaps this conversation is more about expectations than it is about their poor behavior.
- Have your feelings been hurt? If so, then you need to get a handle on your feelings, identify the root cause of the problem, and be prepared to keep those feelings in check during the conversation so that things don't get out of control.

IDENTIFYING THE DESIRED OUTCOME

One thing about heated conversations is that our goals can change, and this is why it's important that you plan what you want ahead of time. If you don't have the luxury of planning ahead, you've got to learn to step back and ask yourself, "What do I really want here?" In the heat of the moment, our goals can change very quickly from, "I'm trying to present/argue a point," to, "I'm trying to save face, because now I am embarrassed," to, "Now I need to win at all costs."

Stepping back and asking what you want can take practice because it's one of those things that looks great on paper but can be difficult to do in real life.

For example, if you start out debating vacation days within your team and the conversation is not proceeding, step back and ask yourself, "What am I arguing about? Is it specific dates or something more? What's my motivation to where I am now, which is pushing for a very specific set of dates?"

As you evaluate your position, you might realize that you are pushing for a certain week off because it falls close to a long weekend, is highly desired, and in previous years, Meg always gets that week off. You realize that it's about winning a battle with Meg much more than it is about getting your week off.

Once you consider how your motivation has changed, it's time to step in and tactfully approach what is really bothering you: Meg has been able to take four-day vacation weeks by linking them to a statutory holiday. You'd like to be able to do that too, in order to save a few vacation days. You'd like the holidays to be fairly distributed since you have both worked for the same amount of years in the department.

Ask yourself:

- What's the best-case scenario in having this conversation?
- What's the worst-case scenario if we don't have this conversation?
- What is my personal motivation for this conversation? Can I keep this in mind as the conversation unfolds?
- Am I being fair to others as I pursue my own goal?

Have an outcome prepared as you decide how to approach the conversation:

- What reaction are you looking for from the other person?
- What do you need the other person to remember?
- What do you need the other person to do after your conversation?

A NOTE ON FAIRNESS

Not everything at work is negotiated, and not everything in life is fair. If you're a supervisor and responsible for the outcomes of your team, that does not mean that you have to engage in a win-win conversation with your staff to get them to work on time. Sometimes, we just need to say what needs saying, such as, "Joe, it's important that you arrive on time for work from now on." We shouldn't negotiate with our children when it comes to bouncing on the furniture, either. "Joe, stop bouncing on the bed" might be what's needed.

TOOLKIT FOR SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATIONS

MANAGING YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Our bodies, especially our faces, do a lot of the talking for us. When you are having conversations, it's important that you pay attention to what your body is saying and ensure that it is congruent with your words. When speaking with others, do you lean forward slightly to indicate that you are listening to them? Do you avoid the temptation to roll your eyes, even if you don't believe what you are hearing?

Communication expert Mark Bowden reminds us that we need to speak in a way that people will perceive as trustworthy. This includes keeping gestures close to the body, as opposed to wildly gesticulating, and to keep your gestures in line with what Bowden calls the "truth plane." This means that gestures are symmetrical and kept in front of the abdomen, not up at the chest or blocking your face.

Positive Body Language	Negative Body Language

SPEAKING PERSUASIVELY

If we can't convince ourselves of something, it will be very difficult for us to persuade others.

Have you ever known another person who talked so much that other people stopped listening? These individuals overwhelm their listeners with conversation, until the listener becomes confused, bored, or both. Expecting a good outcome and knowing when to stop talking are two of the most important elements of persuading others.

Sales people become very effective at persuasion if they want to become top sellers. Managers and supervisors may not have as much experience with the technique, however. Mark Twain used to tell the following story that bears out that point:

“I was attending a meeting where a missionary had been invited to speak. I was deeply impressed. The preacher's voice was beautiful. He told us about the sufferings of the natives and he pleaded for help with such moving simplicity that I mentally doubled the 50 cents I was about to put in the plate.

“He described the pitiful misery of these poor people and I raised the amount again. Then as he continued, I felt that all the cash I carried on me would be insufficient, so I decided to write a large check.

“Then he went on. That preacher went on and on about the dreadful state of these poor natives and I abandoned the idea of a check. And still he went on. And I got back to a dollar, and then 50 cents. And still he went on. And when the plate finally came around...I took 10 cents out of it!”

The lesson: balance enthusiasm with control.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as hearing, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we decide to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

RESPONDING TO FEELINGS

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

READING CUES

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What is the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?

DEMONSTRATION CUES

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

Physical indicators include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give verbal cues or use phrases such as “Uh-huh,” “Go on,” “Really!” and, “Then what?”

You can use questions for clarification or summarizing statements. Examples:

- “Do you mean they were charging \$4.00 for just a cup of coffee?”
- “So, after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?”

TIPS FOR BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER

- Decide to listen. Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- Don’t interrupt people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your eyes focused on the speaker and your ears tuned to their voice. Don’t let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a notebook or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few questions throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be infectious. If you want people to communicate well at work, you must set a high example.

ASKING QUESTIONS

We spend a lot of our lives asking and answering questions, but we aren't always aware of how we ask questions. Open questions often give us difficulty, which is unfortunate since they are the most important ones for us to become skilled at using.

Closed questions can be answered with a single word or two or a simple yes or no. They can begin the closing process in a conversation, or provide confirmation of a detail, but they don't usually lead to gathering more information. Where most people need more practice is asking the open question, those where the listener is given a chance to explain, to tell how they feel about an issue, or offer suggestions.

Open questions give us more information because:

- They encourage other people to talk
- We get opinions and ideas from others
- They can help us determine if people have interpreted what we say correctly
- They can help us arrive at consensus much more readily

Open questions typically begin with a variation of the five W's (who, what, when, where, why) or ask how. Good open questions include:

- "What is your opinion?"
- "How do you think we should solve the problem?"
- "What would you do in my shoes?"
- "Tell me more about..."

Note: Be very careful about “why” questions. All too often these questions sound like accusations, and the listener immediately becomes defensive.

Good questions can include:

- What do you think we can do about this?
- What would you like me to stop doing?
- Would it be helpful if I...?
- Supposing we were to...?
- Help me understand where you’re coming from?
- Let’s set a time when we can talk about the changes we’re both prepared to make.
- I’m prepared to... Would that be acceptable to you?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Write down the names of three people that you consider good listeners.

Did you write down the name of a person that you do not like?

Do any of the three people fit into one of these categories?

- Someone you like
- Someone you love
- Someone you respect

Based on this, if you wish to be liked, loved, or respected, how is it that you need to behave?

PROBING TECHNIQUES

Many people are better at presenting their own point of view than they are at drawing out information from others. Probing techniques can help you draw out information from the individual and help you understand their side of the difficult conversation.

One of the most common ways of probing is to ask an open question, such as:

- “Can you describe that more clearly?”
- “Would you give me a specific example of what you mean?”
- “What do you think we should do?”

The difficulty here is that if you ask too many of these probing questions, the other person begins to feel like they are under interrogation. Be thoughtful about what and how you ask. Consider how many probes you really need to offer.

A second, very effective way of probing is a pause. Stop talking. Let the other person fill the silence.

A third way is to ask a reflective or mirroring question. For example, let’s say the person has just said, “What I really want is fairer vacation policies.” You may respond by just reflecting back to them, “Fairer?” The reflective question usually provides you with an expanded answer without you needing to ask more questions. Of course, it is best used in conjunction with a pause.

Reflective questions or statements focus on clarifying and summarizing without interrupting the flow of the conversation. They indicate your intent to understand the sender’s thoughts and feelings.

A fourth method that is particularly useful to make certain you are clear about what the individual has said is paraphrasing what has just been said, in your own words. An example: “So if I understand you correctly, you...”

You can use this response to show that you want to increase the accuracy of your understanding of what has just been said. You may also want to use it to ensure the sender hears what he has just said. Finally, paraphrasing reassures the sender that you are trying to understand what he/she is saying.

The last method, most often used as a conversation is winding down, is the summary question. Example: “You have tried ignoring the scent of your colleague’s cologne, you have talked with him about how it affects your allergies, and you have tried shutting your door to keep the scent from your workspace. None of these has worked and now you are asking me to intervene. Have I got it right?”



CHOOSING THE TIME AND PLACE

We can't always choose the time and place for a difficult conversation because sometimes they come up in the midst of another conversation or meeting. Sometimes, however, we can plan ahead and choose a meeting place that will make a difficult conversation easier.

When you invite someone for what you anticipate could be a difficult conversation, think about the outcomes that you want to have. If you feel the need to assert your authority, you may want to meet in your office. The setup of your office will influence the conversation, and it's important that you keep in mind that you do not want the conversation to transition to conflict. It is, after all, just a conversation. Do you have to sit across from each other with your desk separating you? Or, do you have a round table available that would be conducive to a less formal style of conversation?

If the idea is for a neutral meeting place (which is probably your best bet), book a meeting room that has suitable light and furniture so that you can talk. This puts both of you on an equal playing field and can create the best opportunity for a constructive conversation that does not become difficult.

Avoid the temptation to have the conversation in a public place like a restaurant or coffee shop. If things get heated, you'll be making a scene. If either of you are worried about being overheard, things that should be said may go unspoken, leading to an underlying current of conflict that does not get resolved.

Remember that in a unionized workplace, some conversations (such as performance management discussions) may require that the union representative also be invited. Depending on the other person's reaction or impression of the conversation, they may invite a union representative to attend. Don't let that action put you off from saying what needs to be said.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

What do you think is the best time of day and workweek for difficult conversations?

FRAMEWORK FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?

When you prepare yourself before initiating a conversation, you are much more likely to deliver an effective message that doesn't get misunderstood, and to deliver it to the right person. Your first question should be: what is my purpose for this conversation? Typical purposes are to inform or direct, to persuade, or to ask a question.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Decide whether the following statements are meant to:

- Inform or direct
- Persuade
- Ask a question

“Robin, we’re experiencing a 50% increase in calls this week. Please adjust lunch hours on your team so that we have adequate coverage.”

“Ashley, we’re overbooked for appointments tomorrow. I think that we could be prepared for the clinic if we make sure that all the treatment rooms have extra supplies when we open.”

“Kim, is there anything else we need to meet our quota this month?”

STEPS FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

STEP 1: MAKE SURE THE RECEIVER IS READY.

Some people resent it when we pounce on them unannounced. Others are much more receptive when you simply ask permission. If you are unsure if someone is ready to talk, try these helpful icebreakers:

- Is this a good time to talk?
- Can we talk about something I've been thinking about?
- Would now be a good time to talk, or should I come back later?
- Can I have 15 minutes of your time? (Make sure you stick to just 15 minutes!)

STEP 2: STATE YOUR PURPOSE.

Remember to use positive intent and to be aware of your body language. If you are professional and avoid anger, you can be pretty sure that the other person will too.

STEP 3: ASK FOR THEIR STORY.

Listen. Ask questions so that you understand. (You may want to refer to the toolkit that we covered this morning.)

STEP 4: TELL YOUR SIDE.

Focus on behaviors, numbers, and facts rather than criticizing the person. "Lesley, your work is always late," is too general, but "Lesley, your reports have been late six times this month," is specific. Be aware of your frame of reference as well as theirs to keep your message clear; reframe as needed.

STEP 5: GET TO THE THIRD SIDE.

Synthesize both stories into the third story. This is an objective view of what's going on, so it'll be different than the first two stories. Here you can check for understanding by sharing what's coming out in both points of view.

STEP 6: EVALUATE THE THREE F'S.

To get to the heart of the problem, evaluate the 3 F's: facts, frequency, and frustrated relationship.

FACTS

What are the facts of the issue? Create a list so that you do not get sidetracked while you plan your conversation. Don't drag in other stories or unrelated issues that have happened previously. If you are talking to someone about tardiness, then stick to that and leave things like poor report writing, gossiping, or not taking care of equipment out of the conversation.

FREQUENCY

Make sure you have a very clear history of the frequency of the issue. In this case, how often is the individual late? How late are they?

Describe the pattern like this: "This is the second time that I've called this to your attention. You agreed it would not happen again. Now I am concerned that I cannot trust you to keep a promise."

Revealing that you notice a pattern brings the history to the forefront. The history is important because repeated frequency erodes your trust.

FRUSTRATED RELATIONSHIP

If your real concern is about the relationship, but you only focus on the pattern, then you are not likely to get the change that you are aiming for. You have to discuss what is important to you in terms of the relationship. Explain that when they repeatedly ignore your expectations to be on time, they aren't just demonstrating a lack of commitment to the job. They are eroding your trust in them, your trust in their ability to do their job, and the possibility of being trusted with assignments in the future.

Statements like the following can be helpful:

- I feel like I cannot trust you to get the work done.
- I feel like I am constantly nagging you and I don't like to do that.
- I feel like I can't trust you to keep the commitments you make.

STEP 7: CREATE AN ACTION PLAN, IF APPROPRIATE.

Make sure that the employee creates or at least contributes to the plan so that they agree to it. They need to be responsible for the outcomes, not blaming co-workers, life at home, or the company if things do not go as planned.

STEP 8: FOLLOW UP.

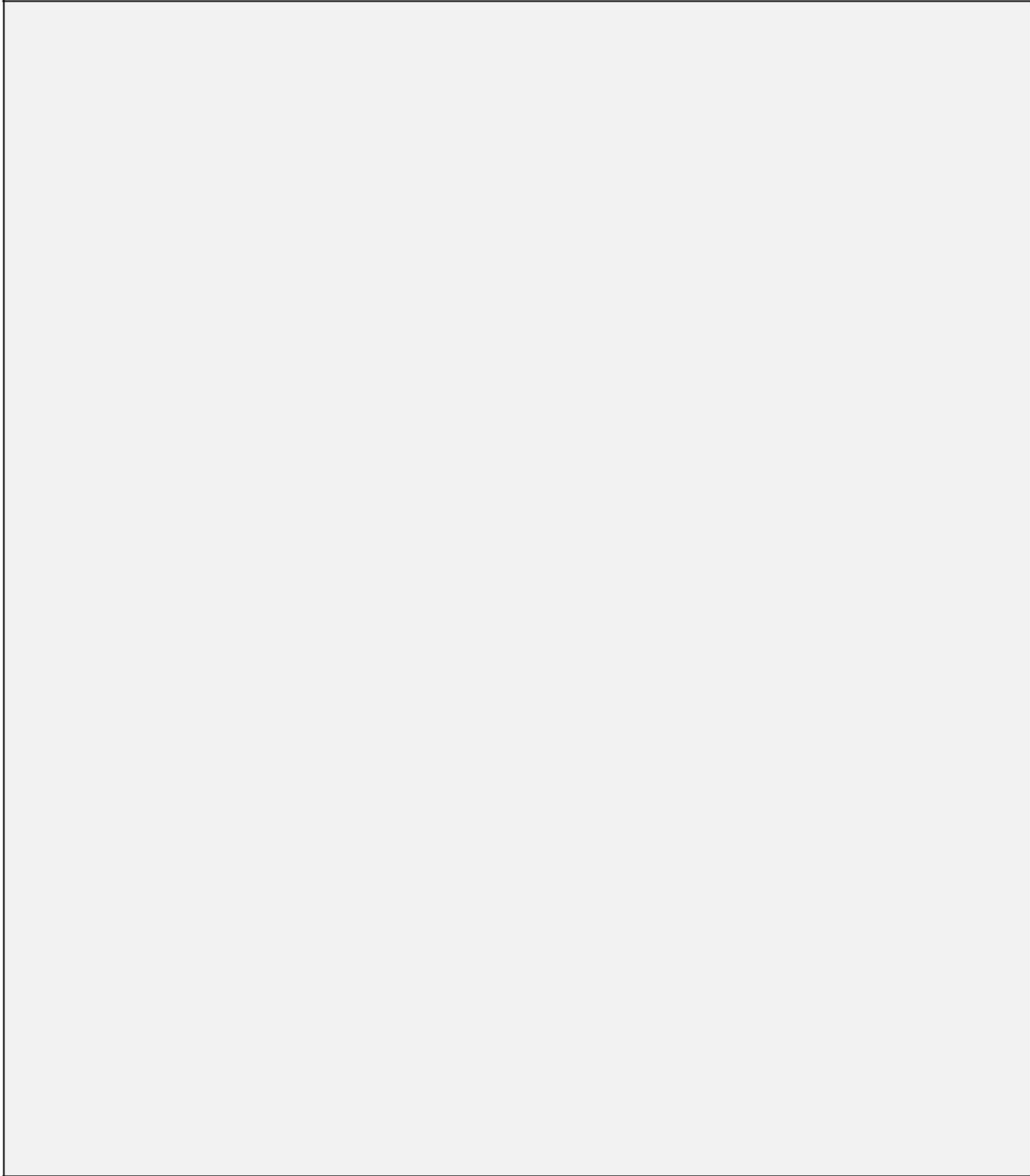
If you commit to follow up with the employee every few days at first, and then less frequently, make sure that you do so. They may need support from you initially to keep on track.

NOTE

We don't want you to get so caught up in steps that you can't move through the conversation. This is the pretty natural flow of a problem-solving conversation, but it should help you when you plan when you take a few minutes to plan what you are going to say. Also remember that you have to listen in a conversation, and that once you know what's really behind a certain behavior or issue, plans can change. Be flexible and forward-thinking and make your job easier!

CREATING A CONVERSATION TEMPLATE

Use the space below to sketch out a template for difficult conversations.



STAYING SAFE

This course is not designed to give you the skills to entertain conversations which might be a threat to your safety. You are probably not trained as a conciliator, mediator, or negotiator, and are not expected to behave like someone who is. As such, we are providing you with some skills to manage difficult conversations, but we're also going to talk about walking away.

MUTUAL RESPECT

If you enter the conversation and anticipate a conflict, then the first thing to do is to consider your frame of reference and make any changes (as we discussed earlier). Next, you need to approach the conversation from a perspective of mutual respect. You do not have to like the person, but the conversation will proceed more smoothly when you do so from a place of mutual respect. It is possible that the person you are going to speak with does not respect you, so that will throw a wrench into things. However, most people will approach a conversation respectfully if they are prepared for a conversation rather than a conflict.

Mutual respect means that you offer the other person a safe place to speak. Show them that they can trust that you are not going to lose your own temper, throw something, threaten them, or carry on unprofessionally.

Establishing mutual respect isn't just something to demonstrate at the time of the conversation; it comes from fostering relationships that are based on trust that is consistently present.

COMMON GROUND

Another element to keeping the conversation civil is to look at what you have in common with the other person, or more specifically, to identify the common goals that you share. This could be something as straight forward as making sure the team reaches their goals, or that the work you both do contributes to the company's bottom line.

SAVING TO CONTROL

Are you able to maintain your composure when things get heated? If you feel you are being attacked personally when the other person becomes defensive, or you are not at ease in a conflict situation, then try to get some practice first. A trusted colleague, an HR consultant, or a mentor can help you get more comfortable with these situations. If you tend toward anxiety, going through some relaxation techniques beforehand can also help, but practicing the conversation (even if doesn't go the way you intend) is probably the best way to make it familiar to yourself and less likely to raise your anxiety when you go through it for real.

During the conversation itself, it is essential that you control your own reactions and any anger. Don't apologize for needing to have the conversation, or you may expose weakness in your armor. Also, don't think that just because you schedule 45 minutes for a conversation that it will have to take that long. If you are finished in 10 minutes, then close the conversation off and schedule a follow up if needed. Don't torture each other by dragging something on that finishes naturally before your scheduled time.

In the same vein, maintain a sense of time so that you know if things are dragging on as you unnecessarily beat a particular point too long or one of you begins talking in circles. Another no-no in a difficult conversation is to drag in old wrongs; talk about what needs to happen in the future instead of bringing up every wrong or shortcoming of the past, especially the things that you have dealt with before.

WHEN TO WALK AWAY

Create a list of five triggers for when to walk away.

WHEN THINGS DON'T WORK

If the conversation goes completely off track, or the problems are not manageable in a conversation, there are plenty of things that you can still do. After all, there are still things that need to be said (presumably), and you do have an organization or department (or even a family) to run.

Sometimes we can feel a bit beat up, as if we are holding all responsibility for what is going on. If you're a supervisor or manager who tries to create a great work environment, most of the staff respect and maybe even like you. However, you probably have also had your share of problems: grievances filed against you, someone keyed your car in the work parking lot, or perhaps you disciplined someone, and they ran to your boss.

You might be tired of dealing with this kind of stuff. However, you can rest assured that when you don't deal with the little things, they do not go away on their own. They simply get worse. We can't operate our businesses successfully if we are always trying to avoid saying what needs to be said and being afraid of negative consequences. The outcomes of letting things fester are usually much worse.

TESTING THE WATERS

Use the space below to write a script for a difficult conversation you may need to have. Consider role playing this conversation with a trusted ally, making sure to appropriately maintain any confidentiality parameters.

Step 1: Make sure the receiver is ready.

Step 2: State your purpose.

Step 3: Ask for their story.

Step 4: Tell your side.

Step 5: Get to the third side.

Step 6: Evaluate the three F's.

Step 7: Create an action plan, if appropriate.

Step 8: Follow-up.

Other Notes

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

I am already doing these things well:

I want to improve these areas:

I have these resources to help me:

As a result of what I have learned in this course, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

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Learning Objectives



- 01 Define frame of reference
- 02 Establish a positive intent and a desired outcome
- 03 Use good communication skills during a conversation
- 04 Draft a script for a difficult conversation
- 05 Use specific steps to carry out a difficult conversation
- 06 Access additional resources as required
- 07 Maintain safety in a conversation

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Considering the Consequences (I)

- 1 PLAN**
At times we can **plan** how we want a conversation to go.
- 2 CONVERSATION**
Other times, the conversation is **spontaneous**.
- 3 BE PREPARED**
You have to **be prepared** to accept the consequences of any conversation you have.

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Considering the Consequences (II)



If **someone on the bus** is rude to you, and you know that you will never see them again, is it worth reacting to, or is it better to just move on with your day?



If you are a supervisor and **one of your staff** takes up a lot of time in meetings by talking over other people and not listening to what they say, are you going to talk with them about their behavior?



If **the physicians** takes up a lot of time in meetings by talking over other people and not listening to what they say, are you going to talk to them about their behavior?

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Establishing Your Frame of Reference (I)






Is the simple fact that this conversation is going to happen influencing how you feel about it?



If it's a **small thing**, will it stay small during the conversation and any follow up?




If it's a **big thing**, do you have the ability to keep the conversation from escalating into an argument or confrontation?

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Establishing Your Frame of Reference (II)




Can you **step back** and see the situation from the other person's perspective?




What about being **completely objective** and seeing it from a third point of view?

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Choosing to Have the Conversation 7


Establishing Your Frame of Reference (III)



01 **A frame of reference** is a way in which we judge other people.

02 We need to be able to **suspend those judgments** and let meanings come to us unfettered.


03 Your **frame of reference** is **made up of** your beliefs, assumptions, values, feeling, judgments, emotions, advice, moods, thoughts, biases, and stress levels at any given moment.

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Choosing to Have the Conversation 8

Establishing Your Frame of Reference (IV)

We have to learn to **take others' points of view and feelings, as well as our own**, into consideration.



This is what we refer to as **reframing**: seeing things from a different point of view.

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Choosing to Have the Conversation 9

Establishing Your Frame of Reference (V)

How can we do this?



01 Put others before yourself

02 Check things out before jumping to conclusions, making assumptions, or reacting emotionally

03 Give others the benefit of the doubt

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Establishing Positive Intent (I)





Positive intent includes the idea that you have good reason for what you are saying and doing.



In order to **demonstrate your positive intent**, avoid making negative assumptions and statements, and focus on the future instead of the past.

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Establishing Positive Intent (II)



I need that report immediately!



There's no way we are doing that!



Put your personal cell phone away during work hours.

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Identifying the Desired Outcome (I)




- **If possible**, plan what you want ahead of time.
- If you don't have the luxury of planning ahead, **learn to step back** and ask, "What do I really want here?"


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Choosing to Have the Conversation


Identifying the Desired Outcome (II)

Ask yourself:



- 01 What's the best case scenario in having this conversation?
- 02 What's the worst case scenario if we don't have this conversation?
- 03 What is my personal motivation for this conversation?
- 04 Can I keep this in mind as the conversation unfolds?
- 05 Am I being fair to others as I pursue my own goal?

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Identifying the Desired Outcome (III)

Have an outcome prepared as you decide how to approach the conversation:



- 01 What reaction are you looking for from the other person?
- 02 What do you need the other person to remember?
- 03 What do you need the other person to do after your conversation?

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Choosing to Have the Conversation

Identifying the Desired Outcome (IV)

A Note on Fairness

- 01 Not everything at work is negotiated, and not everything in life is fair.
- 02 Sometimes, we just need to say what needs saying!



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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Managing Your Body Language (I)

Our bodies, especially our **faces**, do a lot of the talking for us.

Part of this means that **gestures** are symmetrical and kept in front of the abdomen, not up at the chest or blocking your face.

01 **Our body talk**

02 **Talk, perceive truthfully**

03 **Symmetrical gestures**

04 **Talk, Truth Plane**

Communication expert Mark Bowden reminds us that we need to speak in a way that people will perceive as **trustworthy**.

Bowden calls this the **truth plane**.

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Managing Your Body Language (II)

Positive Body Language	Negative Body Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaning into the conversation Appropriate levels of eye contact Body fully facing the other person (rather than partly turned away) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling eyes Checking watch or phone throughout the conversation Leaning out of the conversation, or turning body away Stamping feet or pounding the desk

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Speaking Persuasively

01 If we can't **convince ourselves of something**, it will be very difficult for us to persuade others.

02 Have you ever known another person who talked so much that other people stopped listening?

03 **Expecting a good outcome** and **knowing when to stop talking** are two of the most important elements of persuading others.

04 **Balance enthusiasm with control**.

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations


Active Listening (I)

01 Active Listening
Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view.

02 Hearing
This is not the same as hearing, which is a physical process.

03 Attitude
Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.





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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Active Listening (II)





Respond
Responding to feelings



Reading
Reading cues



Demonstration Cues

- Physical indicators
- Verbal cues
- Questions for clarification
- Summarizing statements



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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Active Listening (III)

Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

Make Decision
Make a decision to listen.

Don't Interrupt
Don't interrupt people.

Keep Focus
Keep your eyes focused on the speaker and your ears tuned to their voice.



Start Conversation
Start a conversation file.

Ask Questions
Ask a few questions throughout the conversation.

Demonstrate Listening Skills
When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be infectious.

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Asking Questions (I)

Closed Questions



Can be answered by either "yes" or "no," or with a word or two



Begin the closing process in a conversation



Provide confirmation of a detail



Don't usually lead to gathering more information

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations


Asking Questions (II)

Open Questions Can be used to:



- 01 Encourage people to talk
- 02 Get information
- 03 Focus conversations
- 04 Solicit opinions
- 05 Gain consensus

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Asking Questions (III)

Good Questions

- What do you think we can do about this?
- What would you like me to stop doing?
- Would it be helpful if I...?
- Supposing we were to...?
- Help me understand where you're coming from?
- Let's set a time when we can talk about the changes we're both prepared to make.
- I'm prepared to... Would that be acceptable to you?




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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Probing Techniques (I)

Five Ways to Probe




- Open question.
- Pause.
- Reflective or mirroring questions.
- Paraphrasing
- Summary questions.

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Toolkit for Successful Conversations

Probing Techniques (II)

Five Ways to Probe



- Open Questions (Provide lots of information)
- Pauses (Give the other person an opportunity to respond)
- Reflective Statements/Echoes (Give the other person another opportunity to respond)
- Summary Probes (Wind down probing)
- Fact-Finding or Closed Questions (To wrap up the conversation)

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Choosing the Time and Place



- 01 If you can plan ahead, that's great!
- 02 If you feel the need to assert your authority, meet in your office.
- 03 If the idea is for a neutral meeting place (which is probably your best bet), book a meeting room
- 04 Avoid the temptation to have the conversation in a public place.
- 05 Remember that in a unionized workplace, some conversations may require that the union representative also be invited.

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Framework for Difficult Conversations

What's Your Purpose? (I)

Typical Purposes



01

To inform or direct

02

To persuade

03

To ask a question

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Framework for Difficult Conversations


What's Your Purpose? (II)

"Robin, with flu season here, things are going to get very busy. Please adjust lunch hours for the nurses so that we have adequate coverage."

"Ashley, we've overbooked for appointments tomorrow. I think that we could be prepared for the clinic if we make sure that all the treatment rooms have extra supplies when we open."

"Kim, is there anything else we need to get all the patients who need check ups in this month?"

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Framework for Difficult Conversations

Steps for a Difficult Conversation

Step 1: Make sure the receiver is ready.

Step 2: State your purpose.

Step 3: Ask for their story.

Step 4: Tell your side.


Step 8: Follow up.

Step 7: Create an action plan, if appropriate.

Step 6: Evaluate the three F's.

Step 5: Get to the "Third Side"

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Framework for Difficult Conversations

Creating a Conversation Template (I)

Planning and Preparation




Purpose:

- Inform/Direct
- Persuade
- Ask Question

My Side

Three F's

- Facts
- Frequency
- Frustrated Relationship

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Framework for Difficult Conversations

Creating a Conversation Template (II)

My Checklist

- Ask permission and make sure they are ready
- State purpose
- Ask their side
- Tell my side
- Get to the third side
- Evaluate the three F's
- Create an action plan
- Follow up



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Framework for Difficult Conversations

Creating a Conversation Template (III)

Next Steps

Action Plan
 Who, What, Where, When

Dates for Follow Up

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Staying Safe



- Mutual Respect
- Common ground
- Staying in control
- When to walk away
- When things don't work

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Testing the Waters

Creating a script for a difficult conversation.
