

Difficult Conversations: Strategy and Practice

October 22, 2015

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Norms

Behavior:

- Silence electronic devices

Engagement:

- Be fully here
- Be honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Be open to new ideas

Today's Objectives

1. Participants will be able to prepare for a difficult conversation
2. Participants will be able to practice a difficult conversation using one model
3. Participants will have resources to explore further learning

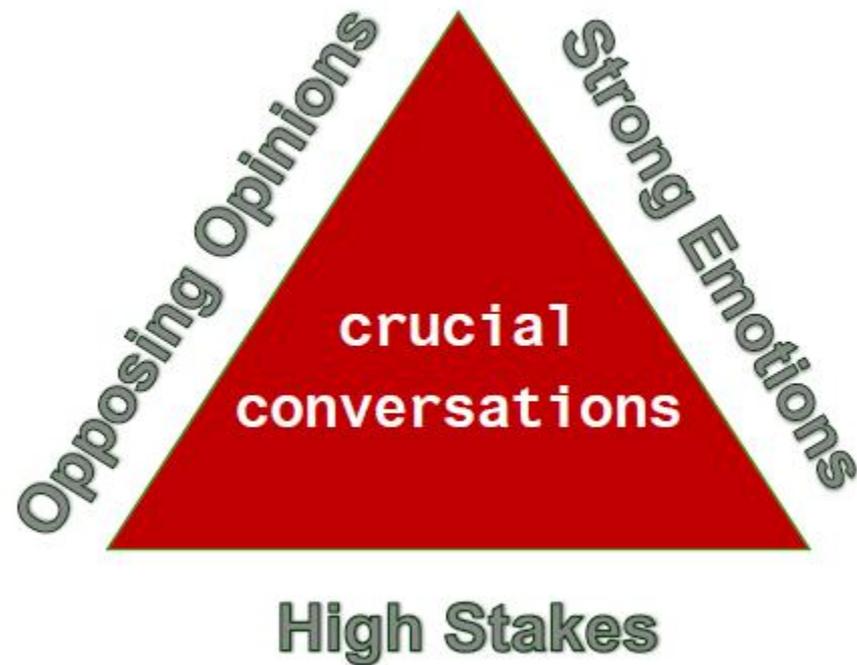
Today's Agenda

- The challenge of difficult conversations
- Shifting our mindset—a clear strategy
- Introduce the *Fierce Conversations* confrontation opening statement
- Practice!
- Resolution and close

The challenge: Four Questions

- How do we justify not having difficult conversations?
- What is the price we pay for not having difficult conversations?
- What could happen if we did have a difficult conversation and it went well?
- What are some of the things we do to try to change someone's behavior (other than being clear and direct)?

Difficult conversations are difficult because . . .



From: Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, by Kerry Patterson and Joseph Grenny

Shifting our mindset

FROM TALKING AT:

- Telling
- My reality
- Blaming
- Being emotional
- Going into battle!

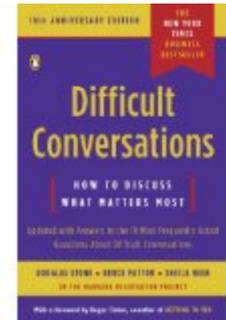
TO TALKING WITH:

- Asking
- Third reality
- Problem solving
- Expressing our feelings
- Starting an exploration!

Our primary strategy

- I want to have this conversation so together we can solve a problem.

Difficult Conversations (Stone)



Difficult Conversations Map Step by Step:

Step One: Prepare by asking questions.

What's my story? What were my intentions? What did I contribute to the problem?

What's their story? What were their intentions? What did they do to contribute to the problem?

What feelings underlie my attributions and judgments?

How does what happen threaten my identity?

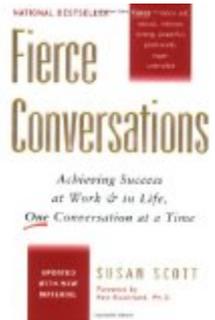
Step Two: Check your purpose and decide whether to raise it

Step Three: Start from the "Third" Story

not your story, not their story but the story as told by a keen observer, someone with no stake in your particular problem.

Step Four: Explore their story and yours

Fierce Conversations (Scott)



1. Name the issue

I want to talk with you about the effect _____ is having on _____

2. Select a specific example that illustrates the behavior or situation you want to change.

For example _____

3. Describe your emotions around this issue.

I feel _____

4. Clarify why this is important—what is at stake to gain or lose for you, for others, for the team, or for the organization.

From my perspective, the stakes are high. _____ is at stake. And most importantly, _____ is at stake.

5. Identify your contribution(s) to this problem.

I recognize my fingerprints. I have _____. For this, I apologize.

6. Describe your emotions around this issue.

I want to resolve this with you – restate the issue.

7. Invite your partner to respond.

I sincerely want to understand your perspective. Talk with me.

Practice

SPEAKER:

- Don't explain the back story, just practice the opening statement
- Speak once, discuss with your coach and then do it a second time

LISTENER/COACH:

- Listen for 'loaded' language
- Ask questions to help the speaker
- Listen for key words

During the conversation

- Seek clarity through questions and probe for deeper understanding.
Tell me more about. . .
What else . . .
What impact have my actions had . . .
- Demonstrate you are hearing what your partner says
I want to make sure I understand what you're saying . . .
- Express your own thoughts and emotions, but remain composed
I felt . . .
From my perspective . . .

Closing the Conversation

- Agreement for future behavior
I will . . . And you will . . .
- Make a new agreement and commit to next steps
(HINT: This may only be the beginning!)
Now that we understand where we're coming from,
we can spend some time addressing . . .
I know we didn't get this solved today, but I'm
committed to working with you to resolve this
moving forward. When can we talk again?

Tidbits

- Your preparation v their preparation
- When and where
- Crying
- Performance/dismissal
- Small offices
- Volunteers

Your questions (Did we cover?)

- Much of my work revolves around volunteers.
- Offering feedback to increase to increase their effectiveness or skills?
- Men are more proactive and women tend to be reserved. How do we communicate well?
- Moving from small independent arts group to larger organization
- Communicating with coworkers struggling with mental illness
- Finding conflict resolutions in the midst of collaborating on new creative work without jeopardizing the creative process.
- Dealing with conflicting ideas when working on collaborative art project
- When to hold difficult conversations and when not to; how to find the right time to hold such conversations?
- How do have a difficult conversation when your co-worker is a close friend
- What is the best way to diplomatically handle challenging conversations and is there ever a right time to fire a business/constituent?
- How to resolve conflict with those who refuse to negotiate. Also, how do you have a meaningful conversation with those who will not be transparent?

Useful Phrases . . .

My reactions here may have a lot to do with my previous experience . . .

I don't know whether you intended this, but I felt uncomfortable when . . .

There are a number of things I've done that have made this situation harder . . .

I'm anxious about bringing this up, but at the same time, it's important to me that we talk about...

I think the reason this bothers me is . . .

I want to talk with you about . . . ("with" you not "to" you)

Please say more about this. I see it quite differently, so I'd like to understand your thinking, how you came to this conclusion.

May I tell you what I'm hearing? I want to make sure I've understood you.

It sounds like you're really upset about this.

This seems really important to you.

If I were in your shoes, I'd probably feel confused too.

Useful Questions . . .

Can you say a little more about how you see things?

What information might you have that I don't?

How do you see it differently?

What impact have my actions had on you?

Were you reacting to something I did?

How are you feeling about all of this?

Say more about why this is important to you?

What would it mean to you if that happened?

What else? What else? What else? (probe for deeper understanding)