

# Managing Difficult Conversations

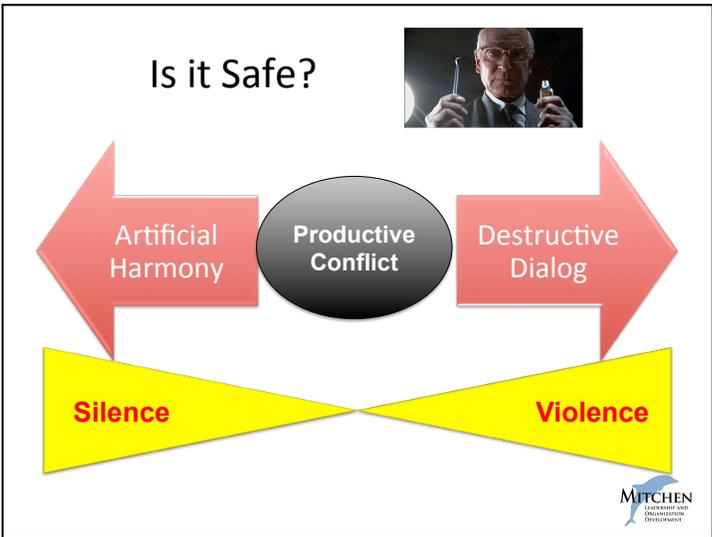
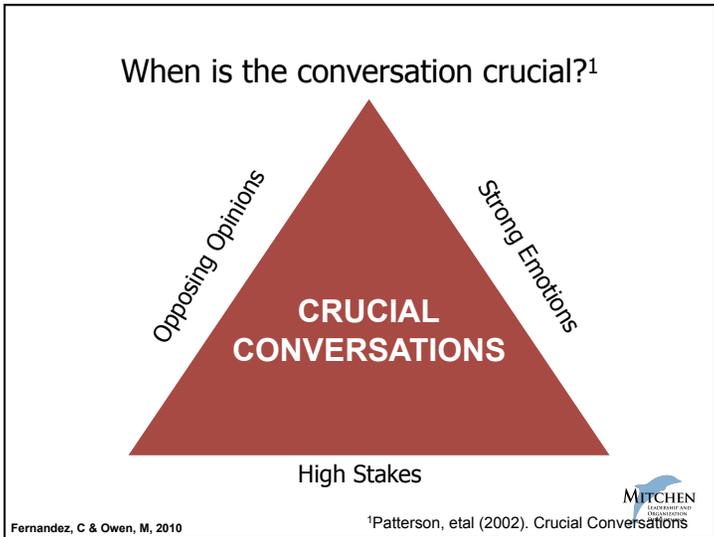
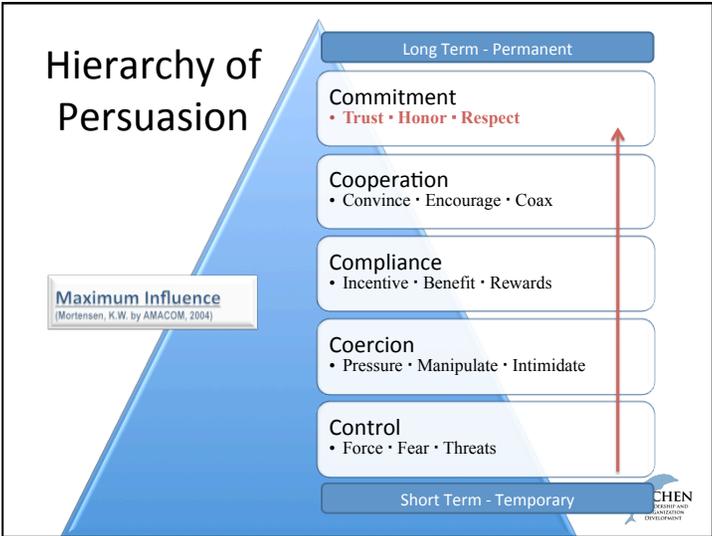
Strategies and Tools to Influence Others in High Tension Situations



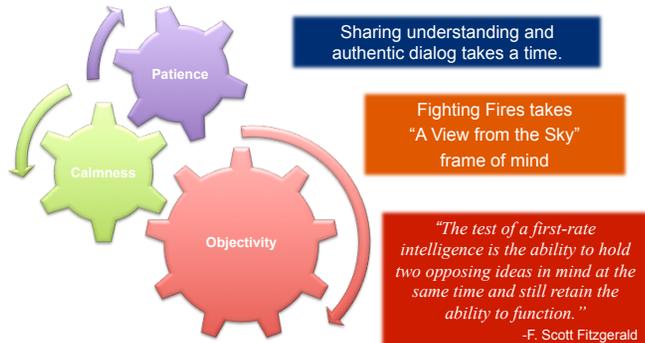
# FSLI

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A Leadership and Organizational Development Company

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# Navigating the Difficult Conversation Are you READY?



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## "The Dissonance Effect"

Paradigms  
Joel Barker

When we express a belief, value, or attitude, we will behave in manner that will maintain consistency with the expression so as to eliminate or reduce tension caused by cognitive dissonance.

We psychologically avoid data that implies we have made a poor purchase once we have bought a new product. (i.e. Buyers remorse)

Our stories work the same way: they act as filters. We need them to be true once we express them to ourselves or to others!

**If I believe someone is incompetent, I treat them that way.. I watch for their mistakes**

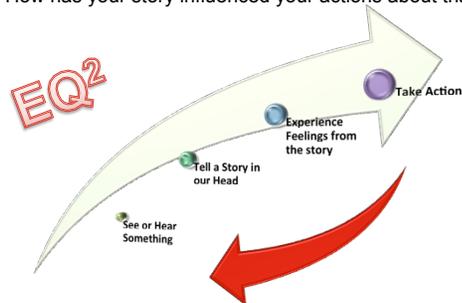
**If I believe they are a jerk, I search for examples**

**Your mind is wired to use selective evidence to support your story even when they might be a very competent person who just made a mistake...**



Festinger, L. (1957). A theory of cognitive dissonance.

How has your story influenced your actions about that person?



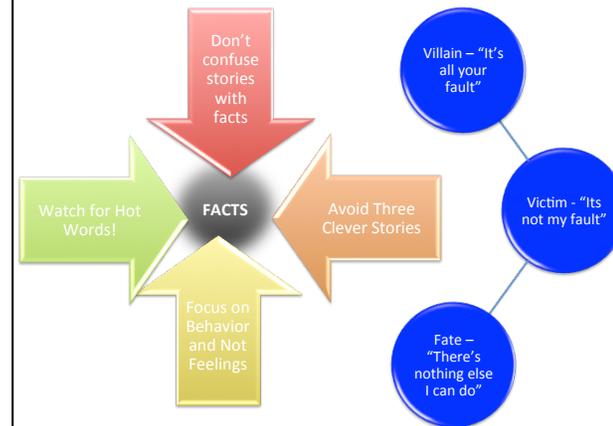
**When we can put "our stories" aside (seeing the facts) we can deal more realistically and effectively with any situation**

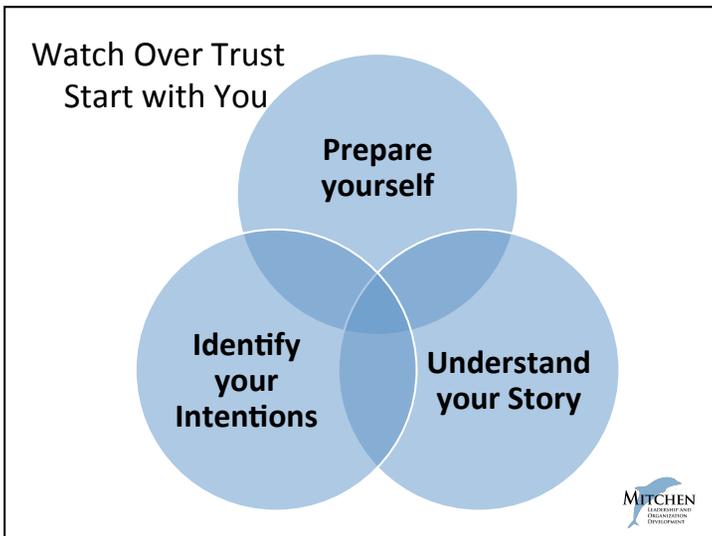
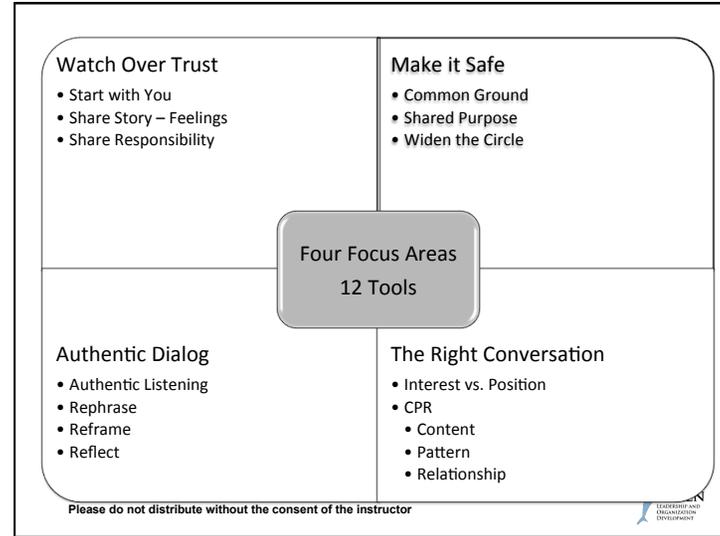
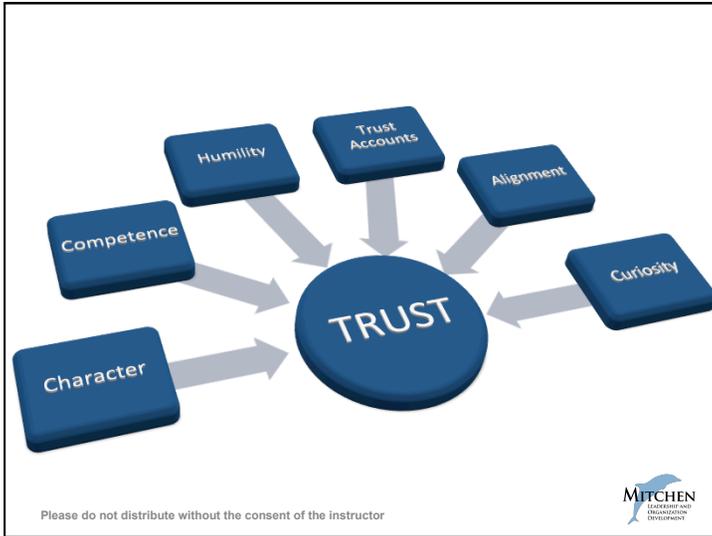
Crucial Conversations (Patterson, Grenny, McMillian, Switzler, 2002)  
Theory in Practice (Argyris, C.; Schön, D., 1974)



## Get Back to the Facts!

Conversation  
Chart Exercise





**Watch Over Trust  
Sharing Your Story & Feelings**

“I’m feeling some real tension here and it’s making me feel uncomfortable. I am wondering if we can agree to some ground rules about how we speak to one another.”

**TRANSPARENCY**

Setting the stage for a difficult conversation by sharing how you prepared and your concerns for a productive discussion.

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**MITCHEN**  
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DEVELOPMENT

## Watch Over Trust Share Responsibility

### Example:

"I want to apologize for not taking the time to notice earlier that you seem frustrated. I value you and the contribution you make. I am distressed that you might have been feeling out of sync here while I was distracted by my other responsibilities. However, I hope that now while we are both here that we can talk about this situation and come to some better understanding."

Take some ownership for the climate of the situation helps the other party open up more about their story and feelings. It also increases safety.



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## Make it Safe: Common Ground

*Build the inter-relatedness of each party!*

Affirm the common role and value of each party to the group

Help each party put themselves into the shoes of another

Have each party argue for the interests of the other person

## Make it Safe: Shared Purpose

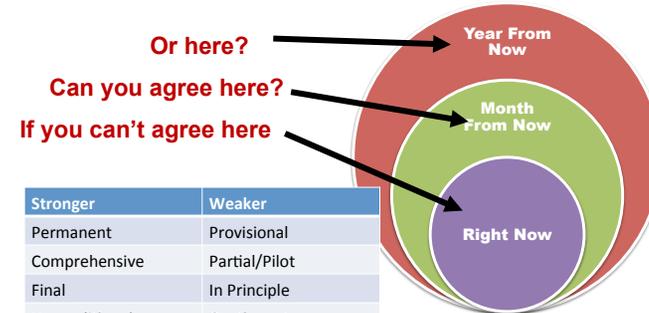
- Help the parties grasp a common objective
- Help the parties see the larger picture of the situation
- Describe outcomes in the broadest, most fundamental terms
- Gain agreement on the overall interests of the group



## Make it Safe:

Vary the strength of the agreement

Time Frame  
Scope  
Permanence



Stronger	Weaker
Permanent	Provisional
Comprehensive	Partial/Pilot
Final	In Principle
Unconditional	Contingent
Binding	Nonbinding
Agree	Live with it



## The Right Conversation: Positions vs. Interests



To learn their interests?  
Ask WHY they are taking their position?  
Ask WHY they are NOT accepting your position?

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## The Right Conversation: Positions vs. Interests

**Don't bargain over positions:**

- Choosing a position limits the possibility that there are multiple solutions to the issue!
- The more you clarify and defend a position against attack... the more committed you become!
- Arguing over positions takes longer and produces usually just a compromise.
- Arguing over positions endangers an ongoing relationship (Remember our discussion on Trust)



## The Right Conversation: Positions vs. Interests

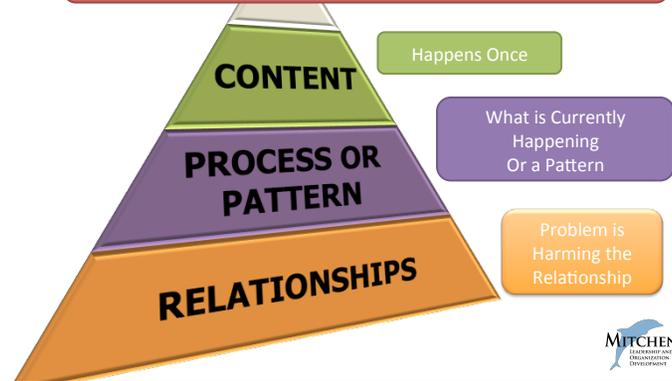
Remember that the most powerful interests are basic human needs:

- Security
- Economic well-being
- A sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Control over ones life



## ► The Right Conversation: CPR

If you keep having the same conversation over and over, maybe your having the wrong conversation...



## Authentic Dialog Whole Heart Listen



- Your brain is quiet, not composing “the answer while your counterpart is talking.
- You don’t interrupt, finish their statements, or wave off further information by agreeing.
- You ask questions.. You’re curious!
- Watch the non-verbals!
- Your not enumerating the flaws in their arguments.
- Intent -> Understand their story.

Helps people “FEEL” heard!

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## Authentic Dialog: Rephrasing

Say It In Other Words  
(Don’t Just Parrot What They Said To You).

“We need to do things *right* around here and she’s doing them wrong!”



“I hear you saying that you are concerned about the quality of work our organization does.”

Help people “hear” their statements from another perspective.

- Words mean different things to different people
- Communication is complex
- We don’t always say what we mean



## Authentic Dialog : Reframing

Position the Situation Differently

“Listening to their whining is a waste of my valuable time.”



“Listening is the most important thing you do every day”.

Help the individual see the situation from another perspective, one that is not necessarily their own.



## Authentic Dialog : Reflecting

The Emotional Content of Their Words

“You sound very frustrated with this situation”

“I can imagine that you must be feeling some anxiety over this.”

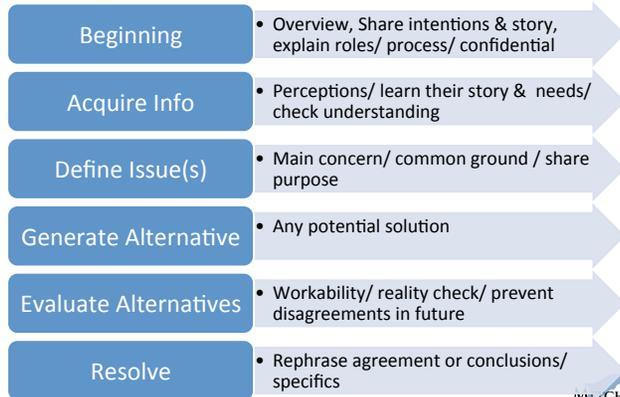
“I hear the tension in your voice, please tell me more about your concerns”.

Feel Heard

Sometimes, in order to move on, people need to have the emotional content of their statements reflected to them.



## BADGER Approach



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Executive Development  
Strategic Planning  
Expert Facilitation  
Change Initiatives  
Organizational Fitness  
Talent Management



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