

Managing Difficult Conversations



Strategies and Tools to Influence Others in High Pressure Situations

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Hierarchy of Persuasion

Long Term – Permanent

Commitment
• Trust • Honor • Respect

Cooperation
• Convince • Encourage • Coax

Compliance
• Incentive • Benefit • Rewards

Coercion
• Pressure • Manipulate • Intimidate

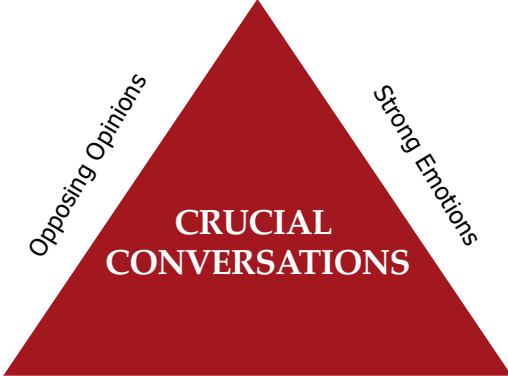
Control
• Force • Fear • Threats

Short Term – Temporary

Maximum Influence
(Mortensen, K.W. by AMACOM, 2004)

*“I wanted the influence. In the end I wasn’t very good at being a University President. I looked out the window and thought that the man cutting the lawn actually seemed to have more control over what he was doing.”
- Warren Bennis*

When is the conversation = crucial?¹



CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Opposing Opinions

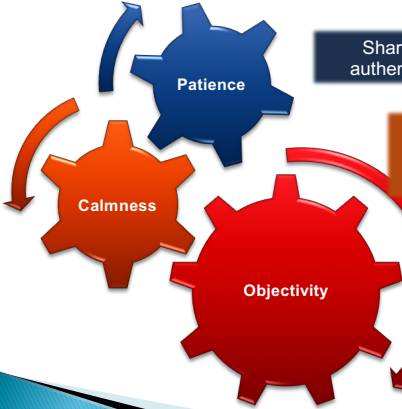
Strong Emotions

High Stakes

¹Patterson, etal (2002). Crucial Conversations

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Navigating the Difficult Conversation



Patience

Calmness

Objectivity

Sharing understanding and authentic dialog requires time.

Fighting Fires takes “A View from the Sky” frame of mind

*“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”
-F. Scott Fitzgerald*

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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)

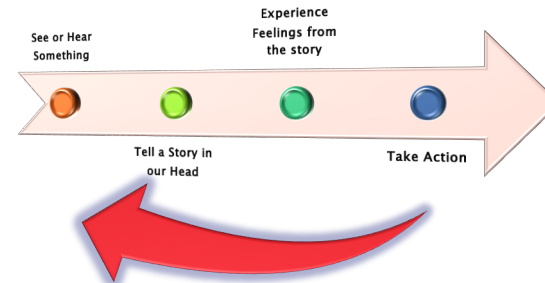
The stories we tell ourselves work the same way: they act as filters. We need them to be true once we express them to ourselves or to others!

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

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



Does your story influenced future inferences about that person?



If we can put "our stories" (inferences) aside and focus on the facts, we can deal more effectively with any situation

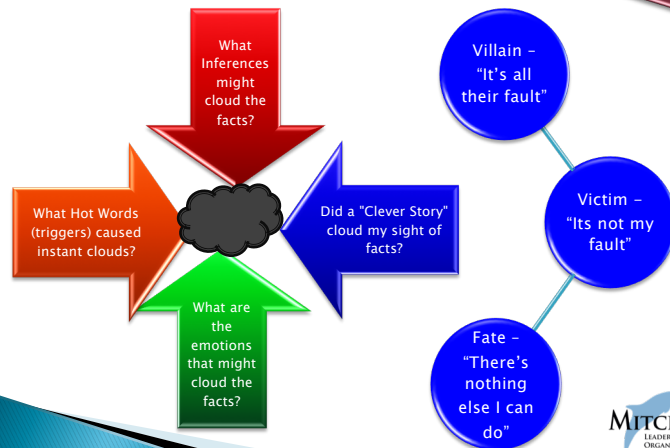
Theory in Practice
(Argyris, C.; Schön, D., 1974)

Crucial Conversations
(Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler, 2002)



Get Back to the Facts!

Conversation
Chart Exercise



Utilitarian Moral Perspectives

- ▶ The principle states: "Of any two actions, the most ethical one will produce the greatest balance of benefits over harms."
- ▶ Focuses on the consequences that actions or policies have on the well-being ("utility") of all persons directly or indirectly affected by the action or policy.

The Camp David Accords



Rights^{Moral Perspectives}

- ▶ The principle states: Act in ways that respect the dignity of other persons by honoring or protecting their legitimate moral rights.
- ▶ Identifies certain fundamental civil, political and economic rights that merit protection or respect
- ▶ The dignity of the human person. [the right to privacy, autonomy, the right to subsistence, freedom of conscience, the right to physical integrity, etc.]

Civil Rights Movement



Fairness & Justice^{Moral Perspectives}

- ▶ The principle states: "Treat people the same unless there are morally relevant differences between them."
- ▶ Focuses on how fairly or unfairly our actions distribute benefits and burdens among the members of a group.
- ▶ Fairness requires consistency in the way people are treated.

Judicial System of USA



Common Good^{Moral Perspectives}

- ▶ The principle states: "What is ethical is what advances the common good."
- ▶ Presents a vision of society as a community whose members are joined in a shared pursuit of values and goals they hold in common.
- ▶ The community is comprised of individuals whose own good is inextricably bound to the good of the whole.

Requiring Vaccination - TVA

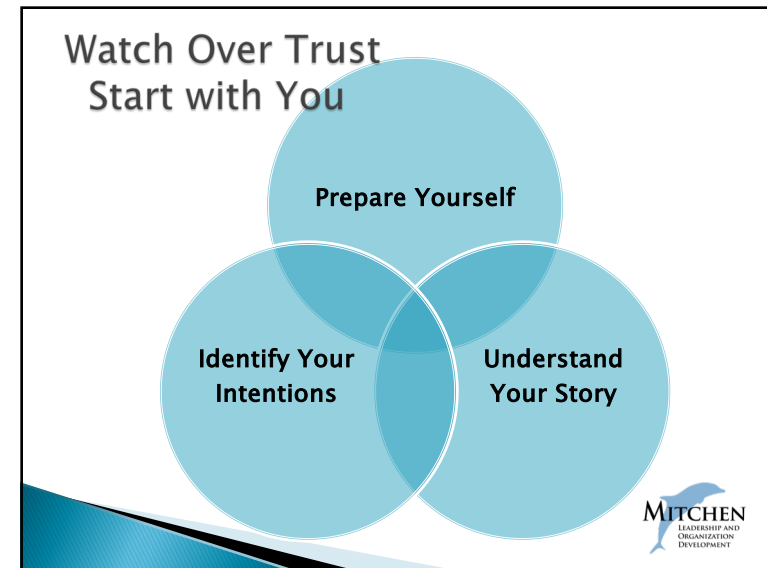


Virtue^{Moral Perspectives}

- ▶ The principle states: "What is ethical is what develops moral virtues in ourselves and our communities."
- ▶ Focuses on attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop our human potential.
- ▶ Examples: honesty, courage, faithfulness, trustworthiness, integrity, compassion, etc.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)





Transparency

Watch Over Trust
Sharing Your Story, Intentions & 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."

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

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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."

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Make it Safe: Shared Purpose

- ▶ Help the parties grasp a common objective

What's the larger picture of the situation?

Think of outcomes in the broadest, most fundamental terms

Gain agreement on the overall interests of the individuals, dept, college, university, etc.



Make it Safe: Common Ground

Help them see where they are more alike than different

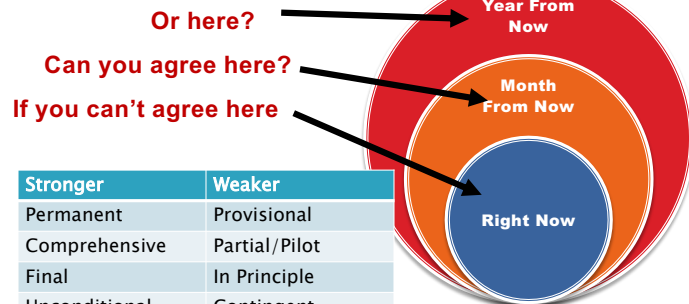
- Acknowledge the common concerns Before Inquiry
- Affirm the role and value of those involved
- Help each to see the perspective of the other side
- Challenge them to make the case for the interests of the other person



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

Interests define
the Problems
(Your needs)



For every
Problem there
are multiple
solutions



A position is
nothing more
than just one
solution
addressing your
needs?

To learn their interests?

Ask WHY they are taking their position?

Ask WHY they are NOT accepting your position?



The Right Conversation: Positions vs. Interests

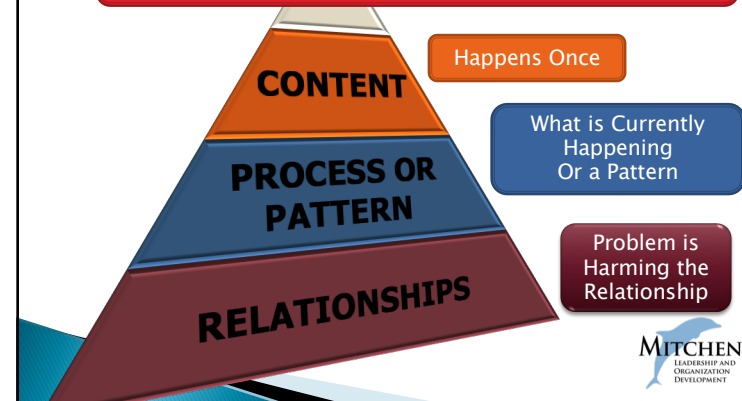
Remember that the most powerful interests are basic human needs:

- Security
- Economic well-being
- A sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Control over one's life



► The Right Conversation: CPR

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



Authentic Listening



ACTIVE LISTENING

- 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!
- You're not enumerating the flaws in their arguments.
- Intent → Understand their story.



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."

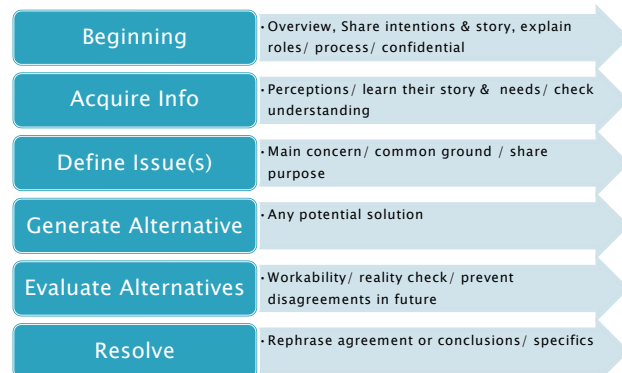
"I hear the tension in your voice, please tell me more about your concerns".

Feel Heard

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



BADGER Approach



Executive Development
Strategic Positioning
Change Management
Leadership Development
Employee Engagement
Organizational Strengthening
Master Facilitation

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