Betsy BeMiller founded her own business, Workplace Resolutions, LLC, for applying leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills to employment and in the workplace. She has synthesized her four decades of experience, knowledge and skills into an approach that is highly facilitative, comprehensive and holistic for assisting individuals, workgroups and/or entire organizations through conflict and back into productivity. She assists organizations in training employees in communication and conflict resolution skills, facilitating work groups to resolve conflict, mediating sensitive workplace issues, designing systems to handle conflicts and solving personnel challenges through coaching and collaboration.

Betsy, an associate with VitalSmarts™, is a certified trainer in Crucial Conversations® and Crucial Accountability®. She has been a trainer also for The Ken Blanchard Companies’ Situational Leadership® II and Gung Ho!®.

Betsy’s clients include public agencies (federal, state, county, municipal, ports, utilities), universities (Univ. of Washington, Univ. of Puget Sound) & colleges (Evergreen State, Green River, Highline, Pierce, Clover Park, Bates) and many organizations (nonprofits, corporations, businesses, etc.)
Areas of Professional Development to Explore:

Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Beginning Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging Conversations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Listening</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts vs. Stories</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladder of Inference</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for a Challenging Conversation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Footprint</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity &amp; Challenging Conversations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensiveness</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Challenging Feedback</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Purpose</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Communication – T.A.L.K. Model</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Personal Development</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Glossary</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invitation to Book Club Learning 30

Professional Development Objectives:

1. To build skills and strategies for expressing differing ideas and issues openly and respectfully
2. To build skills and strategies in receiving both feedback and ideas that differ from one’s self perceptions
3. To explore defensive behaviors—and develop healthy alternatives to responding to others
4. To practice skills in addressing challenging issues and expressing differing opinions
5. To understand how assumptions contribute to our own reality and affect our emotions and behavior around others

Values for Us to Act On:

- Full engagement (including silence electronic devices – check messages at breaks)
- Build upon your experience
- Practice listening with intent to understand
- Build on others’ ideas, expressions
- Capture ideas for your personal professional development
- Las Vegas / Confidentiality Rule: What’s expressed here about work stays here.
Challenging Conversations

A *Challenging Conversation* is any conversation that is . . . well, difficult, in which we find it hard to talk.

**Several Areas of Challenging Conversations that Leaders Hold:**

- Resolving violated expectations
- Following up on broken commitments
- Addressing employee inappropriate behavior/action

**What are some others?**

- 

What makes these conversations *challenging* for leaders?

What are some specific skills that might help you and other leaders to become more effective in holding conversations like these?
To Hold, or Not to Hold . . . A Challenging Conversation

Rationalizations that are used to NOT hold a Challenging Conversation*

- I don't want to hurt their feelings.
- They will misinterpret what I say.
- They won't be receptive.
- It will put our relationship at risk.
- I will be vulnerable to retaliation or counterattack if I open up.
- It could escalate, and I should not increase the conflict.
- I will be out on a limb and won't be supported.
- Nothing will change anyway.
- I always take the risks and this time it's their turn.
- In the past, I haven't found it useful.
- I could lose my job, or the respect of others.
- It's not me - they're the ones who are stuck.

Rationalizations that can be used TO hold a Challenging Conversation*

- It's possible for me to communicate honestly without hurting anyone's feelings, if I do so empathically.
- It's possible for me to communicate accurately so there will be less possibility of misinterpretation.
- They can't be receptive unless I give them something to receive.
- Without honesty, there can't be an authentic relationship between us.
- If I act collaboratively, they will find it more difficult to respond defensively.
- I increase my own self-esteem and skill as well as their opportunities to change through honest communication.
- The problem will get worse if I don't communicate honestly.
- If it escalates, I can use conflict resolution skills or mediation to resolve the conflict at a deeper level.
- If I risk being honest, the other person may take that risk also.
- Things will begin to change when I communicate honestly.
- I can't live with myself if I don't speak my own truth.
- I could improve my job and gain the respect of others.
- We will both remain stuck unless I do something to end the impasse.

# Active Listening

*Behaviors that help another talk*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ensuring Safety** | to invite another's expressions  
to promote open & honest dialogue | ✓ respect other perspectives  
✓ be aware of nonverbals  
✓ demonstrate appreciation |
| **Acknowledging** | to convey interest  
to encourage another to keep talking | ✓ Not about agreeing  
✓ use neutral words, nonverbals  
✓ vary responses, intonation |
| **Clarifying** | to help you clarify what is said  
to get more information  
to assist another broaden their perspective | ✓ ask questions  
✓ restate your interpretations to urge another to elaborate |
| **Reflecting** | to show you are listening  
to clarify feelings and needs  
to provide opportunity for another to hear what s/he is saying | ✓ restate the overall feelings and emotions heard  
✓ restate the basic facts and interests |
| **Empathizing** | to show you understand  
to help another evaluate their own feelings through “hearing” them | ✓ validate another’s basic expressed feelings |
| **Validating** | to affirm another’s worthiness  
to express respect  
to convey that ideas different from your own expand your reservoir of ideas | ✓ support the value of another’s issues and feelings  
✓ show appreciation for another’s efforts and actions |
| **Summarizing** | to review progress  
to pull together salient ideas and facts  
to establish a basis for further discussion | ✓ restate major ideas, facts and interests  
✓ describe common ground  
✓ describe differing perspectives |

**Learning Points:**
Developing Active Listening

Helping another talk

Gather in Triads

3 Rotations, taking turns as Speaker, Listener, Observer

As Speaker

Reflect on something recent that left you feeling frustrated. Choose something you feel comfortable expressing to others. When you speak, “leave space” for the Listener to reflect back to you what was heard.

As Listener

Your charge is to use Active Listening skills (previous page) ONLY. No other responses: not identifying, no telling your own story, no asking questions outside of those that are part of Active Listening.

Throughout, demonstrate your understanding of the Speaker’s story by reflecting and summarizing key points you heard. If the Speaker has not allowed much space for reflection, summarize when time is called.

As Observer—and Timekeeper

Allow the Speaker 3 minutes, signaling when 1 minute is left. Allow the Listener to summarize fully even after time is called. Limit your response (next) to at most 2 minutes.

Provide observations to both. Did the Speaker leave space for the Listener? Did the Speaker in turn listen to the Listener’s reflections and respond to the Listener’s questions?

Did the Listener summarize the Speaker’s feelings, perceptions, assumptions, intentions, etc.?

NOTES:
Facts vs. Stories* 1

See / Hear  ➔  Tell a story  ➔  Feel  ➔  Act

Our stories create our emotions. We create our stories.

Application Scenario: Monday Morning

It’s Monday morning. After enjoying a great weekend with friends and family, you came into the Office feeling good and ready to start the week.

You have been in your position several years. Part of the reason that you feel good coming to work after a nice weekend is that most of your co-workers acknowledge your high level of competence.

When you arrived at your desk, however, you could not believe your eyes! Atop your desk were items from your Supervisor’s weekend of work. They covered a gamut of subjects, from reminders and “suggestions” to marked-up reports of yours. Then, when you logon to your computer, you find more messages with comments, questions and advice on a variety of subjects—most of which you feel encroach on your area of responsibility and have limited value for you. You wonder, “Doesn’t she/he have anything else to do on a weekend?”

While you were taken aback with this inundation the first thing on a Monday morning, you are not totally surprised since there has been a constant stream of memos and Post-It® notes from your Supervisor. Cumulatively, you are upset with what you perceive is the Supervisor’s micro-managing and excessive need for control.

Event (See/Hear):

Story:

Feelings:

Act:

Facts vs. Stories II

Individual Reflection & Writing about Your Experience:

1. **Event**: Reflect on a relatively recent, challenging exchange/situation between you and someone else that resulted in you, and possibly the other, being affected by the interaction. Briefly describe (in writing), the observable behaviors, facts.

2. **Story**: What assumptions, conclusions did you draw? (Review *Ladder of Inference*, next)

3. **Feelings**: How were you affected? What emotions did you experience?

4. **Act**: How did you respond, react? What behaviors resulted?
Ladder of Influence

A Challenging Conversation is any conversation that is . . . well, difficult, in which we find it hard to talk.

Reflect on how both you and the other have been impacted:

1. What happened?
   What did I see, hear, say, think?
   What might the other have seen, heard, said, thought?
   Putting myself in the other’s place, how might the other be experiencing the issue(s)?
   Is there more to this that I am minimizing or missing (and that the other is not)?

2. Disentangle Intention & Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware of</th>
<th>UNaware of</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td>Mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts</td>
<td>Other’s on me</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

   What were my intentions?

   What were the impacts on me?

   What are my assumptions about the other’s intentions?

   How might the other have been impacted?
3. What might be my “contributions”—intentional or not—to the situation?
   actions I took

   things I said

   my thoughts or motivations

   possible causes for an unintended reaction from the other

   anything that might have escalated tension

   How might I share this in a conversation?

   Examples:

   *I recognize that my delayed response to your e-mail contributed to our problem.*

   *Although I didn’t intend it, when I brought up our customer’s criticisms in the meeting, you were really embarrassed.*
4. **What are the feelings?**
   What feelings come up for me when I think about the issue?

   When looking deeper into my feelings, I find . . .

   Looking at what the other has said and done in reaction to the issue, what feelings do I think the other is having? What has the other said s/he is feeling?

5. **How are my self-perception and identity impacted by the issue(s) and these feelings?**
   What does the other’s reaction say about me, and how does that differ or compete with how I see myself?

   Do I feel my integrity is being called into question?

   Do I feel I have been wrong about my self-image, and that I am somehow bad?

**INSIGHTS, IDEAS, INTENTIONS:**
# My Notes in Preparation for a Challenging Conversation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Stories</th>
<th>Impact / Intent</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Identity Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact on me:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>What’s the other’s story?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>A “third” story:</td>
<td>The other’s intentions:</td>
<td>What did the other contribute?</td>
<td>□ Disappointment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact on the other:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Hurt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Guilt</td>
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<td>□ Embarrassment / Shame</td>
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<td>□ Appreciation of the other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Sadness</td>
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Mini Scenario: **Former Supervisor**

**New Supervisor: Sam**

**Your Objective in this Mini-Scenario:**
Remove from this packet the extra *Preparation Worksheet* (page 16), and complete as much as possible, as if you were Sam – but keeping Alex in mind. You can make some assumptions that are not explicit in the briefing. As time allows, prepare to report your main ideas with the whole group.

**Your Briefing:**
1. You are Samantha (Sam), now Alex’s current supervisor. Alex has requested a meeting with you to discuss some issues she* has. You have heard through the office grapevine that Alex feels discriminated against. When she requested the meeting, she appeared nervous and formal.
2. Because you are new in the role of supervisor, now you too have become nervous and anxious. You feel like you are walking on eggshells. You do not want to do anything that reflects poorly on you or your Manager, who promoted you into this position—and is concerned with the Office’s image.
3. Alex's Former Supervisor, Frances, had briefed you about all of the current projects and had given you her perspective on "the lay of the land." She described to you each staff member in terms of value and productivity. She gave the impression that Alex needed a lot of direct supervision—as if she did not work well on his own. She also made some comments about Alex that you felt were inappropriate, including some comments about gender and ethnic background.
4. Because you have never been a supervisor before and have not worked with anyone from Alex's background, you are a bit uncomfortable around her. You have been keeping a close eye on her. While you have been a bit abrupt with her, you have been somewhat abrupt also with everyone out of a need to demonstrate that you are in charge.
5. You have reviewed Alex's personnel file and notice that her performance was rated much higher before Frances was his supervisor. You are not sure whether Alex is a problem employee or whether there was a specific problem between Alex and Frances that has caused problems with Alex's performance.

**NOTES:**

* Alex may be male (Alexander) or female (Alexandra)
Mini Scenario: Former Supervisor

**Staff Member: Alex**

**Your Objective in this Mini-Scenario:**

Remove from this packet the extra *Preparation Worksheet* (page 16), and complete as much as possible, as if you were Alex – but keeping Sam in mind. You can make some assumptions that are not explicit in the briefing. As time allows, prepare to report your main ideas with the whole group.

**Your Briefing:**

1. You, Alex, are a frustrated, angry and fearful staff member. You have requested a meeting with your new, recently promoted Supervisor Samantha (Sam).

2. Sam seems to be a repeat of your Former Supervisor Frances, who seemed to dislike you, and nothing you did ever seemed to change that dislike. It seemed as though Frances felt that your errors always had greater impact on the Department than errors made by others. She even criticized you for your attire, saying you were not dressed professionally and, as long as she was in management, she would see to it you were not promoted. Your attire is an expression of your gender identity and ethnicity.

3. You were hoping that you would have the opportunity to establish a new working relationship with Sam. But so far, she* seems to talk down to you. You think she looks at you as if she too does not like you. You suspect that Frances has talked with Sam who influenced her against you.

4. You are not sure where Sam is coming from, for you have experienced acts of discrimination before based on your ethnic background. You recognize that your style of straight, direct discussion sometimes causes others to be uncomfortable.

5. Your work history indicates that you had very good and productive working relationships with supervisors prior to these last two.

6. If you cannot achieve greater understanding with Supervisor Sam, you will file a discrimination complaint: you feel you have been subjected to discriminatory behavior, and you are determined not to let it continue.

**NOTES:**

* Sam may be female (Samantha) or male (Samuel)
# My Notes in Preparation for a Challenging Conversation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Stories</th>
<th>Impact / Intent</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Identity Issues</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>□ Frustration</td>
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<td>□ Disappointment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Hurt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The other’s intentions:</td>
<td>What did the other contribute?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Impact on the other:</td>
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<td>□ Appreciation of the other</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Sadness</td>
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</table>

Unspoken feelings can color the conversation in a number of ways. They alter your affect and tone of voice. They express themselves through your body language or facial expression. They may take the form of long pauses or an odd and unexplained detachment. You may become sarcastic, aggressive, impatient, unpredictable, or defensive. Studies show that "while few people are good at detecting factual lies, most of us can determine when someone is distorting, manufacturing, or withholding an emotion. That's because, if clogged, your emotional pipes will leak."

Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton & Sheila Heen

Unexpressed feelings make it difficult to listen*

“When people are having a hard time listening, often it is not because they don't know how to listen well. It is, paradoxically, because they don't know how to express themselves well. Unexpressed feelings can block the ability to listen.

“Why?

“Because good listening requires an open and honest curiosity about the other person, and a willingness and ability to keep the spotlight on them. Buried emotions draw the spotlight back to us. Instead of wondering how does what they are saying make sense?, and let me try to learn more, we have a record playing in our mind that is stuck in the groove of our feelings: I'm so angry with him I feel like she just doesn't seem to care about me I feel so vulnerable right now. It's hard to hear someone else when we are feeling unheard, even if the reason we feel unheard is that we have chosen not to share. Our listening ability often increases remarkably once we have expressed our own strong feelings.

Unexpressed feelings take a Toll on our Self-esteem and Relationships*

“When important feelings remain unexpressed, you may experience a loss of self-esteem, wondering why you don't stick up for yourself. You deprive your colleagues, friends, and family members of the opportunity to learn and to change in response to your feelings. And, perhaps most damagingly, you hurt the relationship. By keeping feelings out of the relationship, you are keeping an important part of yourself out of the relationship.”

Emotional Footprint

Feelings / Impacts

- abandoned
- accepted
- accused
- afraid
- angry
- annoyed
- appreciated
- apprehensive
- ashamed
- betrayed
- bitter
- bored
- calm
- confused
- confused
- dejected
- depressed
- despairing
- determined
- devastated
- distrustful
- embarrassed
- exasperated
- excited
- foolish
- forgotten
- frightened
- frustrated
- grieving
- guilty
- happy
- hatred
- helpless
- hopeful
- hurt
- impatient
- inadequate
- insecure
- irritated
- joyful
- left out
- lonely
- loving
- misunderstood
- nervous
- hatred
- overwhelemed
- paranormal
- rejected
- remorseful
- sabotaged
- sad
- safe
- scared
- shocked
- shunned
- stupid
- suspicious
- suspicious
- taken
- advantage of
- trapped
- uncomfortable
- undermined
- uneasy
- weak
- weakened
- worthless

Individual Reflection & Writing

Explore your history of identifying and expressing feelings during your life – as a child, teenager, adult.
Looking Inward around Challenging Conversations
It’s all about who we are and how we see ourselves:

- How does what happened affect my self-esteem? my self-image? my sense of who I am in the world?
- What impact will it have on my future?
- What self-doubts do I harbor?

Identity Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>athletic</th>
<th>discrete</th>
<th>independent</th>
<th>persevering</th>
<th>team player</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>capable</td>
<td>easy going</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
<td>problem solver</td>
<td>tolerant</td>
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<tr>
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<td>efficient</td>
<td>level-headed</td>
<td>proficient</td>
<td>trusted</td>
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<td>enterprising</td>
<td>lovable</td>
<td>prudent</td>
<td>truthful</td>
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<td>unbiased</td>
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<td>mature</td>
<td>resourceful</td>
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<td>modest</td>
<td>responsible</td>
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<td>open</td>
<td>selfless</td>
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<td>honest</td>
<td>patient</td>
<td>smart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependable</td>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td>peaceful</td>
<td>talented</td>
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</table>

Two Steps to Complexify One’s Identity in Challenging Conversations
1. Become aware of your identity (for we each have our own sensitivities).
2. Adopt the **AND Stance**

   *I am a good listener and Sometimes, I don’t listen well.*

   *I can exhibit loyalty and Sometimes, I make choices for my self-interest.*

Three Acknowledgements towards Self-Acceptance about Challenging Conversations
1. Acknowledge that you will make mistakes.
2. Acknowledge that your intentions are complex.
3. Acknowledge that you have contributed to the problem.
Defensiveness

A defense system is not to protect yourself against others.  
It is to defend yourself against feeling your own fear.  
. . . so, shifts occur when you let yourself feel the fear.  

Jim Tamm

Individual Reading & Prioritizing  (You will not be sharing #1 - #3.)
1. Read through Sign of Defensiveness (page after next).


3. Then of those you marked, rank them in order of “worst” as 1, next as 2, etc.  [For criteria, “worst” can be most frequent, or most harmful to yourself, or most damaging to relationships, or anything else helpful to your own processing of defensiveness.]

Individual Reflection and Writing  (You will be sharing what you wrote (not the writing itself.)
4. Selecting one of the behavioral responses you listed above, describe what you recognize – or think – happens before your defensive reaction takes hold.  As time allows, analyze other “triggers” that occur in other responses.
Defensiveness

Individual Reflection and Writing, continued

5. My Defensiveness Action Plan: With the insight of your reactive behavior — and what triggers it, how might you respond differently? What behavior choice might you make instead?

A Sharing Process

6. One person volunteers to start sharing any recognitions about self that arose during this awareness opportunity.

7. As time allows, repeat with other volunteers until all willing group members have shared.

A General Action Plan upon Realization of Defensiveness

   Acknowledge to myself that I am getting defensive

   Slow down

   Confront my negative self-talk (if any)

   CYA (“Check Your Assumptions”)

   Detach (from defensiveness)

   Start again
Signs of Defensiveness*

1. Loss of humor
2. Trivializing with humor
3. Inappropriate laughter or giggling
4. Making fun of others
   (being highly critical)
5. Wanting to be right
   ("No question about it")
6. Wanting the last word
7. Flooding with information
   to prove a point
8. Endless explaining and rationalizing
9. Teaching or preaching
10. Mind reading
11. Jumping to conclusions
12. Withdrawal into deadly silence
13. Rigidity – “My way or . . .”
14. Not wanting to negotiate
15. “I’m aware of that; leave me alone”
   (defense of awareness)
16. Denial
17. Cynicism (victim)
18. Playing “poor me”
19. Taking offense
20. Personalizing everything
21. Sour grapes!
22. Sarcasm
23. Terminal uniqueness
   ("I’m so special that rules don’t apply to me")
24. Eccentricity
25. Selective deafness
26. Blame shifting
27. “It’s just my personality;
   it’s just how I am”
28. Intellectualizing
29. Sudden drop in IQ
30. Acting crazy
   (the temporary insanity defense)
31. Confusion
32. Holding a grudge
33. Blaming
34. Attacking
   (the best defense is a good offense)
35. Being too nice
36. Catastrophizing
37. Magnifying everything
38. Minimizing everything
39. Obsessive thinking
40. All-or-nothing thinking
41. Sudden onset of illness or
   prone to accidents
42. Becoming addicted (alcohol, drugs,
   people, sex, shopping, working,
   gambling, chocolate, workshops, etc.)
43. Suddenly tired or sleepy
44. High charge or energy in the body
45. Fast breathing/heartbeat
46. Cold, clammy skin
47. Hot, sweaty skin
48. Speaking too fast
49. Emotional rigidity
   (if I feel it, it must be true)
50. Tight stomach
51. Becoming physically immobile
52. Tight muscles
   (neck, shoulder, face, etc.)
53. Tears

* adapted from work of Radical Collaboration Group LLC, as presented by Jim Tamm in his Keynote Address for the 7th Annual (2014) Negotiation Nuts & Bolts Conference, King County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution
When someone communicates negatively, we have four options as to how we receive the message:
1) blame ourselves
2) blame others
3) sense our own feelings and needs
4) sense the feelings and needs hidden in the other person’s negative message.¹

No matter what others say, we only hear what they are:
observing/experiencing
feeling
needing, and
requesting.²

Empathically Receiving: How the other is—without hearing blame or criticism

What the other observes that does or doesn’t contribute to her/his well-being
  I hear that when you [see, hear, . . . ], . . . .

How the other feels in relation to what she/he observes
  I hear that you feel . . .

What the other needs or values that causes her/his feelings
  Needs - rather than a preference or a specific action
  I hear that . . . because you need/value . . . .

What concrete action(s) the other would like taken
  Requests - Clearly requesting that which would enrich her/his life without demanding
  I hear that you would like . . .

₂ op. cit., p. 94
Establish Purpose*

*Working Toward Mutual Understanding*

1. **Learn Their Story**
   - What information do they see that I missed or don't have access to?
   - What past experiences influence them?
   - What is their reasoning for why they did what they did?
   - What were their intentions?
   - How did my actions impact them?
   - What do they think I am contributing to the problem?
   - What are they feeling?
   - What does this situation mean to them?
   - How does it affect their identity?
   - What's at stake?

2. **Express Your Views & Feelings**
   Express your views and feelings to your own satisfaction. “You hope that the other person will understand what you are saying, and perhaps be moved by it, but you can't count on that. What you can do is say, as well as you can, what is important for you to say about your views, intentions, contributions, feelings, and identity issues. You can share your story.”*

3. **Problem Solve Together***

   *Learning with Curiosity versus Certainty of Our Own Stories*

4. **I have Choices:**
   - Resolve it “within”: change my behavior/attitude—or let it go
   - Have a conversation with “the other”
   - Talk to others.


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Open Communication
T.A.L.K. - Addressing Issues with Respect

Talk to Yourself First
Address the Issue
Listen and Ask
Keep an Open Mind

Talk to Yourself First

In reviewing the situation, what facts do I have and what story have I created from those facts?

- facts = specific, objective, observable, quantifiable
- stories = feelings, assumptions, expectations, attitudes, values, etc.

Am I overreacting?
- Can I balance my story with a possible “other” story?

What is my goal and/or intention in addressing this issue?
- What is it I want to accomplish? What is my purpose?

How is my Identity affected?
- I view myself as . . . . Does the other’s perception of me conflict with how I see myself?

Address the Issue

Request time to meet.

Express your intention for the discussion.
- Begin with a “third story”: integrate aspects of my story with my sense of the other’s story as an acknowledgement of interest in balancing perspectives.
  - “My intention is to . . . and clarify my objectives to minimize misunderstandings.”

Use “I” statements.
- For example: “I have sent you three e-mails this week.”

Describe the facts as you know them.
- For example: “I saw you roll your eyes, turn your shoulder and walk away.”

Offer your perceptions and feelings.
- For examples: “I was expecting a response . . . .”
  - “I started to suspect you were avoiding . . . .”
  - “I felt dismissed . . . .”

[continued]
Address the Issue, continuing

Describe impacts.
For examples: “The project was stalled because we didn’t have your response.”
“When I feel dismissed, I really shut down; it’s over for me.”
“I felt dismissed . . . .”

Describe identity elements.
For example: “I see myself as very reliable. Your e-mail described me as a flake.”

Acknowledge contributions—both yours and the other’s:
For example: “I recognize that when I shut down, it made it difficult for you to . . . .”

Listen and Ask

Demonstrate Active Listening. (page 5)

Acknowledge - bring full attention

Ask the other to describe their perceptions of the situation.
Restate - “So, you were out of the office all last week, and it was difficult to respond.”
Validate - “It’s difficult to be out on travel and keep track of office needs.”

Ask the other to describe their needs.
For example: “Can you describe what you need from me?”

Explore both’s needs—yours and the other’s.
For example: “How can we find a way to keep our project on track when you’re traveling and still make sure you’re involved?”

Develop an agreement that meets both’s needs.

Keep an Open Mind

Be willing to acknowledge your part of the situation.

Be willing to forgive and “let go” of the other’s contributions.

What have you learned about yourself and the other that strengthens your relationship?
Commencement

Learning Conversations
Considering the components of a learning conversation, I plan to integrate more of . . .

Defensiveness
With the understanding that defensiveness is a natural response that may diminish collaboration, in order to be more collaborative, I plan to manage my defensiveness by . . .

Listening
To increase my listening effectiveness, I plan to . . .

T.A.L.K.
I plan to address the following issue(s) . . .

Briefly list processes, action steps, etc. you plan to initiate or expand.
A Brief Glossary for Challenging Conversations

**Acknowledgement** - Letting the other person know that what they have said/done has made an impression on you, that their feelings matter to you, and/or that you are working to understand them.

**Arguing** – Trying to convince the other that you are right and the other is wrong. Arguing blocks exploration of the other’s story and of understanding what we would not otherwise know about how the other sees things and what the other intended. Arguing puts us on the defensive, and blocks the ability to have a productive discussion.

**Blaming** – Assigning responsibility for fault, or judge another’s intentions.

**“Both And” Conversation** – A conversation that embraces the stories of both participants as being important to finding a solution. Discussing what you believe and what the other believes helps to create a learning conversation. It does not mean believing both stories. Both stories matter, regardless of whether we agree with them.

**Certainty** – a firm conviction that something is “the truth”. Being certain that we hold the truth often leads to misunderstanding, conflict and difficulty in conversation and interpersonal relationships.

**Challenging Conversation** – any time we find it hard to talk. Three sub-conversations should be included to have a successful challenging conversation: the “What Happened” Conversation, the **Feelings Conversation** (see below), and the **Identity Conversation** (see next page).

**Contribution** – Helping to cause something to happen. In a Challenging Conversation, looking at each party’s contribution creates a better understanding of what the acts, words, thoughts and roles of each party may have helped cause the problem to happen. Looking at contribution helps create a learning conversation.

**Curiosity** – Desire to learn or know—in contrast to believing that we know with certainty what the other person’s intentions are or were.

**Feelings Conversation** – A conversation to include our emotional state or reaction. Our feelings matter, and are often at the heart of what makes a conversation challenging—both feeling them, and discussing them. Often when we avoid talking about our feelings, the issue does not go away or get resolved, because what is important to us does not get addressed. Unspoken feelings leak into the conversation anyway, and can cause difficulty. If we don’t express our feelings, it is more difficult to listen to the other person’s side. The key is to find a way to discuss them that does not place us in the realm of blaming and judging.
Framing/Reframing - Taking the essence of what the other person says and “translating it” into concepts that are more constructive—specifically describing feelings (page 18), identity elements (page 18) and/or contributions.

Identity Conversation – A conversation about our sense of who we are, what we stand for, what we believe, and the qualities that make us unique from others. We prepare for an identity conversation by examining what belief/s about ourselves is/are being impacted (see next).

Impact – Effect on us and the other from the experience, actions, words, etc. To be distinguished from intent (see next).

Intent – What we or the other person meant to have happen, to say or do. To be distinguished from the impact it had on the other.

Learning Conversation – A conversation in which we seek to listen and understand the perspective of the other person, and to have them do the same for us. We each have our perceptions and memory about what we saw, heard and said, and how we feel about it. For both sides, a learning conversation broadens understanding and furthers resolution.

Mistakes in conversations/conflicts – Our assumptions about others’ intentions often are skewed. We tend to infer intention from the impact on us and/or what we think about them, rather than learning from them about their intentions. We often assume the worst about the other and the best about ourselves.

Third Story – A more neutral compilation of the elements of what occurred—like a neutral bystander’s reframing. It includes the differences and commonalities from an objective viewpoint (rather than two oppositional positions).
Invitation to *Crucial Accountability®* Book Club Learning

Potential Format
Three 2-hour sessions in January & February, 2017
Up to 30 participants per session
Discussion format, with specific, focused discussion of concepts, tools and strategies

Potential Advance Provisions

Study assignments and questions for self-observation/reflection

INTERESTS, IMPRESSIONS, INTENTIONS: