

# DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS Worksheet

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Every Difficult Conversation consists of Three Conversations:

\* **The What Happened? Conversation** \* **The Feeling Conversation** \* **The Identity Conversation** \*

- A. **The “What Happened?” Conversation starts with wanting to deliver a message that proves I am right.**
- Truth Assumption: *I am right – you’re wrong.***
    - ◆ *What do you believe you are right about? How could the other person be right?*
  - Intention Assumptions: *I know what your intentions are and what you meant to do. My rules of how people should behave are right for everyone!***
    - ◆ *What are your assumptions about the person’s intentions?*
    - ◆ *What are your judgments about the person’s intentions? Are you acting as if our assumptions are fact and that these bad intentions mean the person is bad?*
  - Blame Frame...Like truth produces disagreement, denial, fear of punishment, and either/ or answer. Shift the focus to learning...And the Contribution System...And Problem Solving:**
    - ◆ *What kept you from seeing that this was coming? How can you prevent it from happening again? How did everyone contribute to this problem? What could everyone do differently?*
  - Move from Certainty (*I am right*) to Curiosity (*How do they see the world so that their view makes sense?*) Change the focus from proving a point and delivering a message to wanting to understand what has happened from the other person's point of view AND to share your point of view and feelings.**
    - ◆ **Summarize – Active Listening and Ask “What” and “How” clarifying questions...**  
*What do you understand about the other person’s perceptions, interpretations, and values about this situation?*
    - ◆ **AND Self-disclose your perceptions....**  
*What are your perceptions, interpretations, and values about this situation?*
- B. **The Feeling Conversation...What do we do with our emotions?** Not expressing feelings is like getting the plot but missing the point. Feelings pop through and hijack the conversation...They keep us from listening and hearing.
- We translate our feelings into **Judgments:** “*If you were a good co-worker/team member you would have been there for me...*” **Attributions:** “*Why were you trying to make me look bad?...*” **Characterizations:** “*You are just so inconsiderate*”... **Problem Solving:** “*The answer is for you to ....*”
    - ◆ *What judgments, attributions, and characterizations are you making in this difficult situation? Finish the specific statements that you are thinking and feeling.*
    - ◆ *Good employees...*
    - ◆ *This employee is trying to make me look...*
    - ◆ *This employee is...*
  - We all learn what feelings are okay to express from our family and our supervisor.
    - ◆ *What feelings were okay for you to express in your family? What feelings were avoided?*
    - ◆ *What feelings are okay for you to express at work in your department? What feelings are avoided?*
  - List feeling words that are okay to express at work based on the five feeling areas...mad, sad, glad, scared, and hurt.
    - ◆ *Suggestions...frustrated/annoyed...sad/disappointed...pleased/good... unsettled/confused ...concerned/apprehensive... stung/hurt*

- ◆ *Think of difficult situations at work and list the feelings associated with the situation and list a feeling word that you would be willing to say.*

**C. The “Identity Conversation” is an internal conversation and where you start.**

1. It questions three internal core identities:

- ◆ ***Am I Competent?*** *What does this difficult conversation say about how competent I am?*
- ◆ ***Am I a Good Person/Worthy?*** *What does this difficult conversation say about who I am?*
- ◆ ***Am I Acceptable/Likeable?*** *What does this difficult conversation say about how likeable I am?*
- ◆ *What does this conversation say about me?...about who I am?...about how to I see myself at work and in the world?...What impact will it have on my future?...What are my fears and self doubts?*

2. **Three things to accept about yourself**

- ◆ **You will make mistakes.** *Do you hold yourself to an absolute all or nothing standard? What impact does that have on you? What is your department’s approach to mistakes?*
- ◆ **Your intentions are complex.** *Acknowledge to yourself when your intentions were self- motivated and not as “good” as you wished they were. Acknowledge to yourself the parts of your behavior that you did not like.*
- ◆ **You have contributed to the problem...You are not to blame AND you can take responsibility for how you have contributed to it.** *“Mess up. Fess up. Fix up.” We all make mistakes and we must be responsible to fix the mistake.*

**D. The Difficult Conversation**

1. **Start from the inside or the “Identity Conversation” and “The Feeling Conversation,” before you have the “What Happened Conversation.”**

- ◆ Once you acknowledge to yourself your identity issues and feelings, you will not need to feel and act defensive and you will be able to maintain your balance during the What Happened Conversation. See Communication...Difficult Conversation Checklist

2. **Feedback Model**

- ◆ **When you....***specific, descriptive behavior-no interpretations* refer to Section A
- ◆ **I feel...**refer to section B
- ◆ **Because it means to me...**refer to section C.
- ◆ **And I wish...**problem solve the future.

3. **Acknowledge the other person’s perceptions, feelings, values AND ALSO acknowledge your perceptions, feelings and values.**

- ◆ **Self-disclosure the feelings and meaning their behavior has on you using the feedback model.**
- ◆ **Summarize and actively listen to their perceptions, values, and feelings AND acknowledge how your behavior could have that impact...Clarify your intentions.**

4. **Get off the IMPACT/INTENTION SEESAW by actively listening to the other person and taking the AND Stance...**

- ◆ **AND Stance** is based on the assumption that the world is complex, that you can feel hurt, angry, wronged, AND they can feel just as hurt, angry, and wronged. They can be doing their best, AND you can think that it’s not good enough... You can feel furious AND still care for the person. The AND Stance moves out of the All or Nothing Stance.