

Managing Difficult Conversations for Mentoring

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Mentoring Skills Workshop co sponsored by OCTRI and the SOM Dean's Office

Session Schedule

- Introduction to the four levels of conflict.
- Presentation of the communication gap.
- Practicing a difficult conversation.
- Coaching others through a difficult conversation.

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Difficult Conversations

"Research has shown that strong relationships, careers, and organizations . . . all draw from the same source of power—the ability to talk openly about high-stakes, emotional, controversial topics."



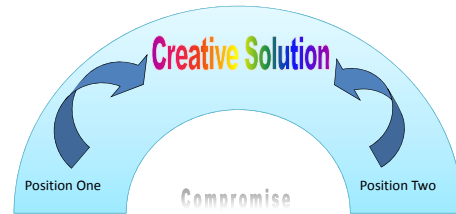
"Strong and bitter words indicate a weak cause."
Victor Hugo

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Crucial Conversations, 2002

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Engaging Different Perspectives



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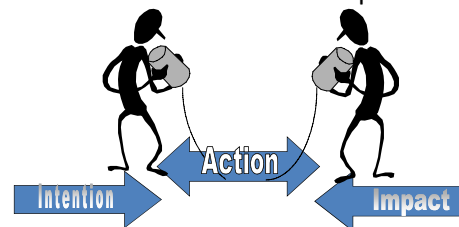
Four levels of Conflict

1. Recognizing differences and choosing not to engage.
2. Acknowledging that we want different things.
3. Seeking to understand others' interests and how they are affected.
4. Discovering creative opportunities.

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Communication Gap



Intentions: Intentions are private and are only directly known to the one who has them.
Actions: Actions are most often public and observable events. They may be verbal or nonverbal.
Impact: Impact refers to a person's inner response to the actions of another. People are rarely impacted the same way by the same actions.


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Close the Communication Gap

- Share specific relevant facts.
- Share the impact and implications.
- Use tentative language to suggest or explain.
- Ask for what you want.



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Tentative Language



Can I check something out with you?
 I'm wondering if this would be helpful . . .
 I'm noticing that . . .
 I may not have the answer, but . . .
 It seems to me that . . .
 Something I'm concerned about is . . .
 I don't know if this will fly, but . . .

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Practicing a Difficult Conversation

What has happened? Describe specific relevant facts. _____

Write about the impact on you personally and the implications for your work.

What outcome do you want in this situation: for yourself, for the other person, and for the relationship?

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Post-Session Assignment

Choose a learning partner to help you practice a difficult conversation. Initiate the conversation real time to improve your relationship and report back to your learning partner on the outcome.

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Recommended Readings

Kegan, & Lahey, [How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation.](#)

Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, [Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence.](#)

Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, [Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High.](#)

Reeder, Jesse, [Black Holes and Energy Pirates: How to Recognize and Release Them.](#)

Scott, Susan, [Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life One Conversation at a Time.](#)

Stone, Patton, & Heen, [Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most.](#)

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