

Worksheet: Preparing an “Opening Statement”

Questions adapted by Niki Steckler PhD from many sources including references at end of this document.

Data – What I see. Describe facts a video would capture. (Avoid assumptions here.)

- I see...
- I notice...
- I observe...

Feelings – What I feel. Consider sharing your personal feelings, share the impact for you.

- I feel...

Interpretations– My story. Be brief. Consider using tentative language here.

- I think/I imagine...
- To me this seems...
- I interpret this as...

Wants – What I want. State the change or outcome you want for yourself and others.

- I would like...
- I do not want...
- It is important to me that...

Inquiry –Ask the other person: What is your perspective? How are you feeling? What do you want?

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Identifying Your Own Challenging Conversations:

There are many different types of conversations that can be difficult. These conversations could include discussions with colleagues, patients, learners, support staff, family, and friends.

Know yourself:

- What sorts of conversations are difficult for you?
- What strengths do you have in communicating with others?
- What is your story about why a recent or upcoming conversation will be difficult?
- What is your purpose for speaking more clearly and confidently?
- What outcomes do you want—for yourself, for the other person, and for your relationship?⁴ Does a conversation seem as if it might help?

Improvement in Challenging Conversations:**Emotional Intelligence/Introspection:**

The first conversation to have is with yourself!¹¹ Three powerful questions⁵ offer a map of the territory to help you get your own head clear and have better control in determining the importance, timing, and control in your conversation.

- How are you feeling right now? (Name that emotion – one word)
- What is that about? (What's your story? What else is also true?)
- What do you want? (For yourself and for others)

Manage Your Own Emotional Reactions:

- Are you noticing “Silence” or “Violence” in yourself or others?⁴
 - Silence: Are you holding back? Are you smoothing over? Are you not sharing important information?⁴
 - Violence: Are you blaming, attacking, or trying to control others?⁴
- Tactics for getting your emotions “out of the basement”
 - “Name it to Tame it!”
 - Ask: are your emotions a result of facts or your interpretation and stories?
 - What was your part?⁴
 - Why would a reasonable, rational and decent person do what this person is doing?⁴
 - What do you really want for yourself, for the other person, for your relationship? What would you do if you really wanted this?⁴

Questions for Managing Interdependence⁹

- What are your deliverables?⁹
- What do you find most meaningful about your work?⁹
- What is it about how I do my work that helps you do yours?⁹
- What could I do differently that would help you even more?⁹
- When does our work seem to be well-aligned and when do we seem to be at cross purposes?⁹

Getting to Yes with Yourself (and other worthy opponents)¹¹

1. **Listen to yourself with empathy:** See yourself from the balcony¹¹
2. **Take responsibility:** Prepare your “backup plan” to meet your own needs¹¹
3. **Reframe your picture:** From unfriendly to friendly¹¹
4. **Embrace the present:** Accept the past and trust the future¹¹
5. **Respect them even if:** Meet even rejection with respect¹¹
6. **Change the game from taking to giving:** From win-lose to win-win-win¹¹

Prepare by Walking Through the “Three Conversations”^{7;10}

- **The “What Happened” Conversation:** What’s the story here?⁷
- **The “Feelings” Conversation:** What should we do with our emotions?⁷
- **The “Identity” Conversation:** What does this say about me?⁷
 - Am I competent?
 - Am I a good person?
 - Am I worthy of love?

Niki’s Integrated “Recipe” for Preparing to Voice Your Perspective

1. **Clarify your purpose for speaking up**
 - What result am I trying to create?
2. **Find a neutral place to start from**
 - Facts and data as a video camera would capture them
3. **Consider sharing the impact and stakes, including emotions**
 - “I’m uncomfortable” / “I’m worried”
4. **Separate out your story and interpretations from the facts**
 - “Is that true?” / “What else is also true?”
5. **Share what you want**
 - For yourself, your colleagues and your patients
6. **Inquire about others’ perspectives!**

Resources/Recommended Readings/Footnotes

1. Gittel, *High Performance Healthcare: Using the Power of Relationships to Achieve Quality, Efficiency, and Resilience*.
2. Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*.
3. Kegan, & Lahey, *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*.
4. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*.
5. Reeder, Jesse, *Black Holes and Energy Pirates: How to Recognize and Release Them*.
6. Scott, Susan, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life One Conversation at a Time*.
7. Stone, Patton, & Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*.
8. Stone & Heen, *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well (Even When It Is Off-Base, Unfair, Poorly Delivered, and Frankly, You're Not in the Mood)*.
9. Suchman, "When Teammates Don't Connect: Learning to Manage Interdependence." Blog post from 1-30-2013 accessed 3-8-2023 at <https://www.rchcweb.com/Portals/0/Documents/Learning%20to%20Manage%20Interdependence.pdf?ver=2015-10-27-164728-133>
10. Tan, *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*.
11. Ury, *Getting To Yes With Yourself: How to Get What You Truly Want*.
12. Ury, *The Power of a Positive No: Save the Deal, Save the Relationship, and Still Say No*.