



DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

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HOW TO HAVE A "DIFFICULT CONVERSATION"

By now you are starting to see that if your thoughts create your emotions and those emotions are what drive your actions and outcomes in the world, then the whole premise of having a "difficult conversation" is one that probably won't serve you in finding the best result.

However, there are times when you want to bring something up and you either feel awkward about the topic or worry about how the other person is going to react. In those cases, it's no wonder we set ourselves up for an "uphill battle" and start to suit up for a "difficult conversation".

So how can you turn this into something less emotionally charged (at least for you)?

This worksheet is like a cheatsheet to help you plan and prepare for conversations that may feel more complex to you and to see if you even need to have the talk in the first place, or if the work is to clean up your own thinking.

STEP #1: GET CLEAN

What is the goal of this conversation?

Are you trying to get the other person to say or do something to make you feel better? If so, you aren't coming from a clean place.

Anytime you put pressure on someone else to modify their words or behaviour for the sake of you feeling better, you have a manual for that person. So many arguments happen when we tell our partners how they are doing a bad job at meeting our expectations.

Remember, a "need" is something you require to survive. Everything else is a "want or desire". Notice if you expect someone else to fulfil your wants and desires and review the module on manuals if you want to take a deeper look at this.

To help you get clear on this:

1. Do a Thought Download
2. Pick a few of the most "unhelpful" thoughts and fill in a few Unintentional Models
3. Now decide on the result you want for yourself. You can't control their behaviour or decide what the outcome will be for them, but you can decide how you want to show up and what your goal is for your share in the conversation. Work backwards and create this new Intentional Model.



YOUR CURRENT THINKING

**DO A THOUGHT DOWNLOAD ON WHY YOU WANT
TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION:**

**CHOOSE ONE OR TWO MAIN THOUGHTS THAT
ARE THE MOST UNHELPFUL FOR YOU AND
COMPLETE THE MODEL TO SEE WHAT THIS IS
CREATING**

CIRCUMSTANCE:

THOUGHT:

FEELING:

ACTION:

RESULT:

CIRCUMSTANCE:

THOUGHT:

FEELING:

ACTION:

RESULT:



WHAT WILL YOUR OUTCOME BE?

**WHAT IS THE RESULT YOU WANT (KEEP IN MIND
YOU CAN'T CONTROL YOUR PARTNERS
ACTIONS OR FEELINGS)**

**WORK BACKWARDS TO CREATE YOUR
INTENTIONAL MODEL**

RESULT:

ACTION (HOW YOU NEED TO SHOW UP TO CREATE THAT
RESULT):

FEELING YOU WOULD NEED TO FEEL TO DRIVE THE
ACTION:

THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEED TO THINK TO CREATE THAT
FEELING:

CIRCUMSTANCE: THE CONVERSATION

STEP #2 SHOW UP

Who do you want to show up as in this conversation?


Once you have decided on your personal outcome for the conversation and the thought, feeling and actions that will get you there, you need to show up and have the conversation.

1. Start the conversation by acknowledging the result you trying to create (remember you can't decide what their result will be but you are in control of your part).
2. Acknowledge any discomfort you feel about starting this conversation along with any responsibility you have for creating the situation. Some phrases that might help:

"I am feeling awkward about bringing this up, but I want to be a better communicator and I love you so I am hoping we can talk about something..."

"There has been something on my mind and I want to first apologize for not bringing it up before now. I know I have been acting in a way that isn't as loving as I want to be and I have figured out why..."

"I have something I want to talk to you about and it may not be easy to hear but I love you and want to show up as a good partner so I think it is important for us to talk about it so I can clear it up in my mind. Are you open to talking to me right now?"



3. Lead with the facts and be curious. It is so tempting to start conversations with a description of how you feel and a judgement about what someone else did or didn't do BUT as you know your feelings aren't caused by someone else's actions or words, but are caused by your own thoughts.

Because of that, sharing the facts (neutral things that happened in the past that both of you and anyone else involved would agree on) and taking responsibility for your own interpretation (aka. your thoughts) will be helpful.

Ask questions and be curious about their interpretations of the situation. Remember that your goal is not to get them to modify their words or actions if you are coming from a clean place AND you can make any requests here you want.

Notice the first example vs. the second:

"What you said about me was super mean and I need you to apologize and promise never to do it again or I will be very upset."

"I would appreciate if you didn't say I was terrible at putting the kids to bed."

The first example is having a demand. "Super mean" is a thought in your mind and assumes you know what the other person meant without a doubt. It makes two requests that are both entwined with your happiness and have an ultimatum attached.

The second example is a clear request without trying to control the other person.



STEP #3 GIVE SPACE

After you have shared the facts and make a request or simply been curious about their position, give them space to respond or time to process.

Whatever they think or feel about the conversation is not up to you and yet most of the time a discussion turns into an argument is when one or both people try to control the other and it doesn't go the way they want.

Since you can't control how someone else feels (because their own thoughts do that), you can choose to stay open and curious throughout the conversation.

Even if they cry, get upset or walk away you can still feel love for them and give them the space they need to formulate their thoughts.

If you do feel yourself getting defensive, remind yourself that this is a natural thing for your brain to do when there is any hint of tension in a close relationship. It's not a problem. It is a normal part of human evolution and you don't need to respond from that place.



BOUNDARIES

The way we will define boundaries is much different than what most people mean when they think about this topic.

For this course I will define a boundary as something you create for yourself to draw a line around your physical or emotional space. It is much like a property line. If someone crosses that line and breaks into your home, you probably have clear consequences in what you would do in that instance.

Having strong boundaries that you stand behind is important for your self-worth and empowerment and often "difficult conversations" are moments when we define our personal boundaries.

Most people confuse items in their manuals for boundaries.

"If you don't buy me a necklace for my birthday, I am going to break-up with you."

This is a manual issue because you are giving an ultimatum if the other person doesn't conform to your request in the way you want.

A boundary is something you set to keep you safe or healthy physically, emotionally or mentally in a situation where someone else is violating your space or potentially harming you.



HOW TO SET BOUNDARIES

To set a boundary you:

1. Make a request. Ask the person to stop doing the thing that infringes on your property (literally or emotionally).
2. Tell the person what the consequence will be if they choose to continue doing what they are doing.
3. If they (as an adult who can do what they want) continue to violate your boundary, you **MUST** apply the consequence. This is so important and yet many people do not follow through. Setting a boundary is serious and if you don't intend to follow through then you tell the other person that you don't respect yourself enough to do what you say you will do.

Worse than that, you don't treat yourself with the respect you have been asking for from the other person.

Respect your boundaries and teach others how to treat you.