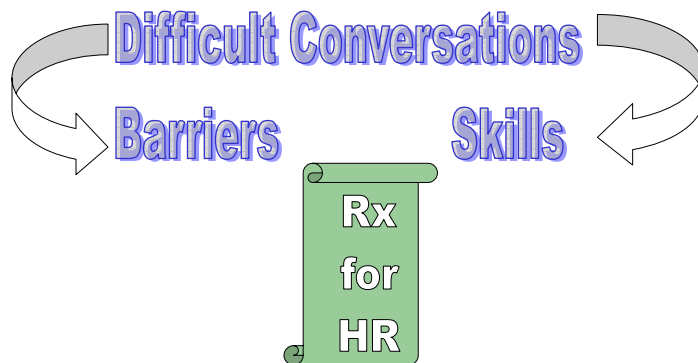


Difficult Conversations: Ensuring Success without Sacrificing Your Sanity

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Agenda



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What Makes Conversations Difficult?

- Situations
- People
- Fear of Confrontation

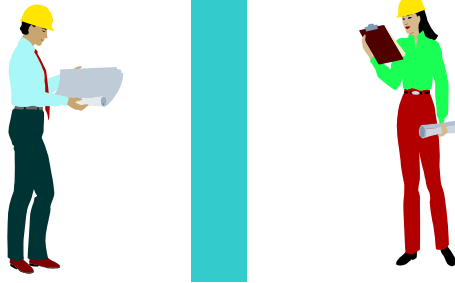
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Why We Don't Confront

- Negative experience with conflict
- Fear of exposing our shortcomings
- Fear of losing control
- Fear of retaliation (or even violence)
- Fear of making others angry and the loss of respect or approval
- Lack the skills to manage confrontation and fear of making the situation worse

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Barriers to Communication



Culture, Gender, Age, Education, Skill, Experience,
Style, Perceptions, Knowledge, **Attitudes**

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Attitudes and Latitudes

- Chronic Complainer
- Locked in the Past
- Angry Employees (Mad at the world)
- Persistent Pests
- Ramblers

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Dealing with Difficult Attitudes

- Stay focused and objective.
- Don't get trapped in their emotions
- Breathe deeply -- don't become defensive
- Acknowledge the behavior, its impact on the discussion
- Refocus and determine if you can continue with a constructive discussion

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Dealing with Difficult Attitudes

- Avoid sounding patronizing, even if you are frustrated.
- Avoid interrupting, unless it's to get a conversation back on track.
- Use a "soft" approach. Soften your voice, smile, posture, eye contact, and body language to send a message of openness.
- Use tact and sensitivity. Be polite and diplomatic, even if the message is negative.

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Get to the Root of the Issue

- Keep the discussion **focused** on the information you need
- Encourage **dialogue**
- **Identify** the real versus the perceived problem

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Get to the Root of the Issue

- Ask the person to explain the problem from his/her point of view
- Explain the problem as you see it
- Ask for clarity
- Keep the person and attitudes separate from the issue

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Get to the Root of the Issue

- **HOW?**
 - Active Listening
 - Maintaining Control (of the conversation)

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Be An Active Listener

- Turn off listening filters
- Be compassionate
- Listen for feelings and facts
- Listen for what's not said
- Listen for what you want and don't want to hear

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Be An Active Listener

- Remember that we all see the world differently because
 - We all have different information
 - We are all influenced by different past experiences
 - We all reach different conclusions based on our own information and experiences

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Maintaining Control

- Don't become distracted
- Keep the discussion on point -- ask questions that allow clarification
- Ensure understanding
 - Repeat, paraphrase, take time and allow for reflection
- Don't interrupt or allow interruptions
 - Talking "Stick"

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Delivering Bad News

- **Prepare** in advance
 - Script it out and rehearse
- Talk **privately**
- Come to the **point** quickly
- Just do it

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At the end of the day

- Maintain confidence and self esteem of **all** parties involved
- Maintain constructive relationships
- Maintain the privacy of others
- Maintain integrity
- Maintain balance
- **Take care of you**

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Infectious Nature



- Employee with anxiety (anger, emotion) seeks help
- You become anxious (angry, etc) in your attempt to “fix” their problem
- **Results in Anxiety (emotion) generator**

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Maintain Balance

- Don't let them “press your buttons”
 - Maintain a level-headed response to other's intense emotional demands
- Give them a “shot of reality”
 - Don't absorb their issue or their unrealistic expectations
- Move away from past problems

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When dealing with difficult conversations

- Recognize the barriers to communications
- Be an active listener
- Recognize specific attitudes
- Control emotional behavior (yours and theirs)
- Be confrontable

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