

Difficult Dialogue: Critical Conversation Skill for High Stress Situations

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AGENDA



- What makes a conversation “critical?”
- How to know when conversations turn critical
- Proactive responses for best possible outcomes
- 6 dialogue skills to apply

What makes conversations “critical?”



Definition of Difficult Dialogue

- Different perspectives or opinions
- High risk to personal or professional interests
- Strong feelings and emotions

“90 percent of all communication problems are caused by differences in either semantics or perceptions.”

~ Stephen Covey

Defusing Difficult Dialogue



Spot the Symptoms

- Conditions matter when content is important
 - Notice when others are feeling threatened
 - Notice when YOU are feeling threatened

***“Speak when you are angry, and you will
make the best speech you will ever regret.”***

~ Laurence Peter

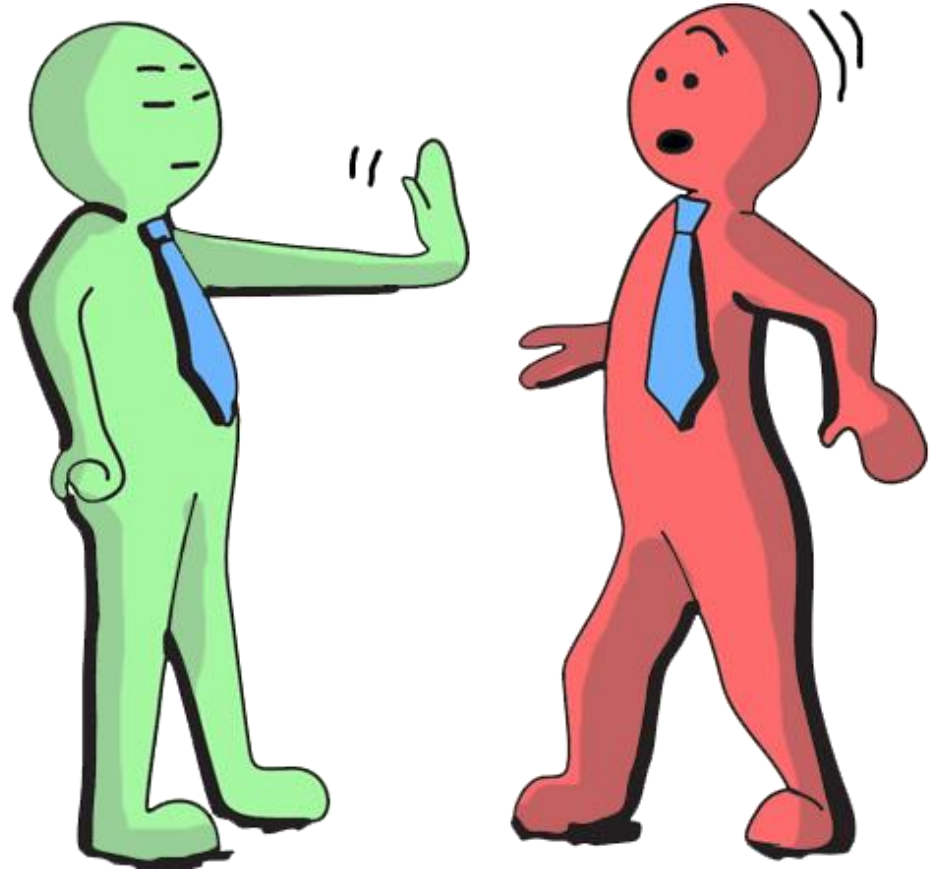
Your Style Under Stress

➤ Withdraw into Silence

- Verbal games
- Sarcasm
- Avoiding/sugar coating
- Physically leave

➤ Attack with Violence

- Interrupting
- Speaking in absolutes
- Labeling
- Attacking person instead of addressing issue
- Belittle/threaten



Difficult Dialogue Skills

Press Pause

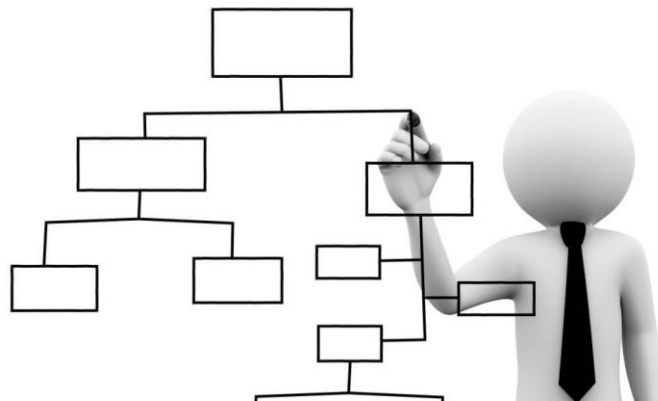
- Press Pause:
 - Stop and think about what you truly value
- Choose your response based on what's most important
 - Values based response is always more effective than emotion based response
 - How can both sides win?
 - Think “and” instead of “or”



“The void created by the failure to communicate is soon filled with poison, drivel, and misrepresentation.”

~ C. Northcote Parkinson

Focus on Facts



- What really happened?
- What are the facts of the situation?
- What are the potential outcomes?

“When we do speak, the key to communication is not what we say, but rather the attitude that lies behind what we say.”

~ Marianne Williamson

Seek to Understand



Empathy isn't sympathy.



Look at things from the other person's perspective.



Empathically listen:

If you aren't ready to listen, you aren't ready to talk.

Mirror content, emotions, etc.

Restate/Rephrase to understand.

***“The great enemy of communication,
we find, is the illusion of it.”***

~ William H. Whyte

Declare Intent

- I don't mean to....
- I don't want to....
- I did want to....



***“Have an understanding, so you
don’t have a misunderstanding.”***

~ Charles Blair

Ask, Don't Tell

- Ask questions
- Listen for what's NOT being said
- Make sure you understand before responding



“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.”

~ Martin Luther King Jr.



**Apologize When
Appropriate**

- Sincerely – don't apologize if you don't mean it
- Thoroughly – heartfelt, not half-hearted
- Immediately – don't wait

Thank you!

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