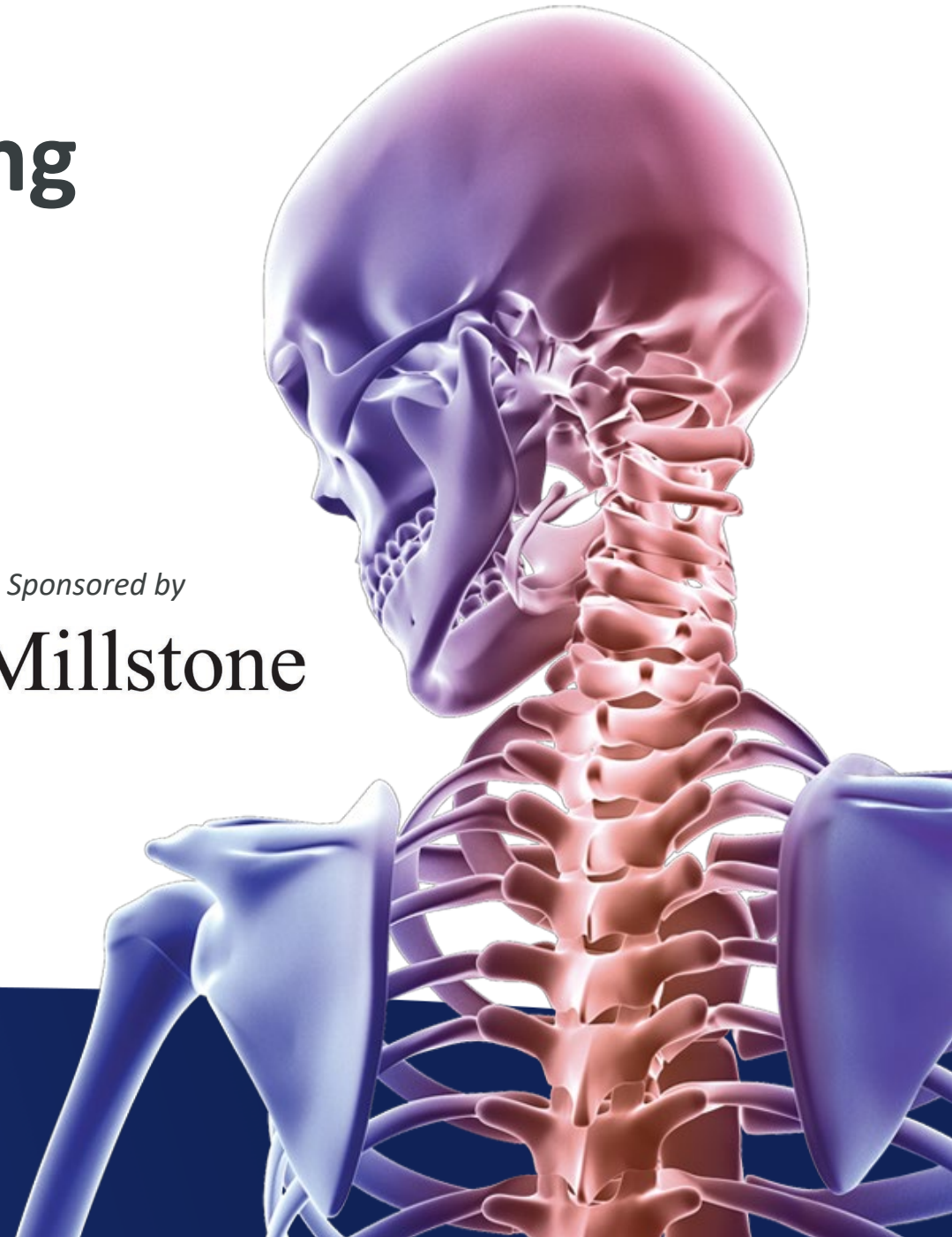


Don't Shy Away from Having Difficult Conversations

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What is a Difficult Conversation?



A difficult conversation is anything you find hard to talk about. These conversations can be challenging as they may involve discomfort, conflict, vulnerability or the risk of damaging relationships.

Examples of Difficult Conversations

- 1) Delivering constructive criticism or negative feedback
- 2) Addressing performance issues or conflicts in the workplace
- 3) Discussing sensitive matters such as relationships, health concerns or finances
- 4) Negotiating terms or resolving disputes in professional or personal relationships
- 5) Sharing difficult news or delivering unwelcome information





Difficult Conversations are Hard

What We Fear...

Hurting people's feelings

Not "being nice"

Waiting for the "right" time

Not wanting to offend

Don't know how!

Fear of reaction:
defensiveness, anger, hurt



- ✓ Helpful (positive intention)
- ✓ Timely
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Future focused/Path Forward
- ✓ Cultural considerations
 - ✓ Language
 - ✓ Bias
- ✓ Dialogue
- ✓ Courage plus communication skills

A Model For Difficult Conversations

Prepare

- Set your intention. Identify your story and goal.

Invite/Open

- *Do you have a few minutes? I'd like to discuss XYZ....*

Intention

- *I hope we can...I want us...I want you to succeed...*

Situation/Impact

- *I'm concerned about...because...*

Share Views

- *What are your thoughts?...*

Problem Solve

- *Can we explore some solutions...Would you....?*

Confirm & Thank

- *I appreciate your attention, willingness, etc.*



Prepare: Set Your Intention

Purpose:

- *What is the goal of the conversation? What do I want to accomplish? What is the issue? Why am I raising this?*

Self:

- *How do I want to show up? How do I need to show up?*

Others:

- *How might the other person or people see the problem or situation? How might they engage in the conversation?*

Prepare for Three Conversations in One



Facts



Contributions



Feelings



The “Facts” Conversation



What is your version of the story? Where are you placing blame?
What do you think happened? What data are you gathering?



What do you imagine is their version of the story? How might
they see the situation?



What’s bothering you most? What might be bothering them?



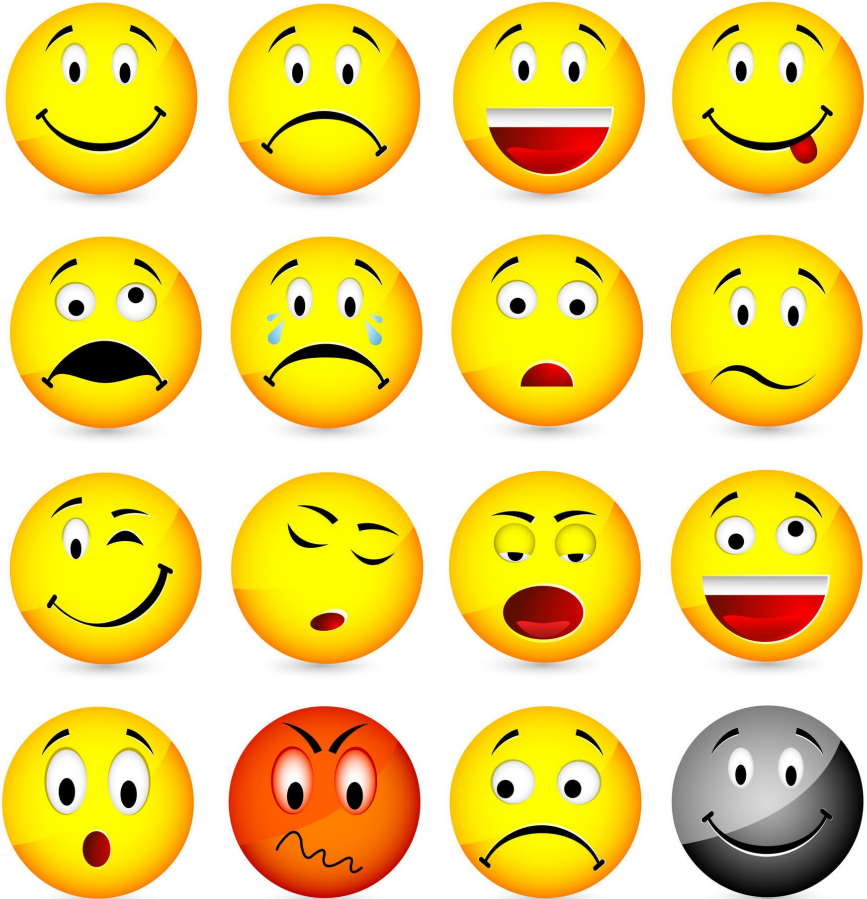
What is the "third" story?



The “Contributions” Conversation

- ✓ Be prepared to own your contribution
- ✓ How have you contributed to this situation?
- ✓ How might you be wrong?
- ✓ Taking responsibility for your role (large or small) will help the other person own theirs

The “Feelings” Conversation



- ✓ Identify your own feelings.
- ✓ What feelings of yours might you fear showing?
- ✓ Which of ***their*** feelings are you afraid of encountering?
- ✓ Prepare to listen and acknowledge their feelings. Stay calm.
- ✓ Discussing feelings is essential to doing difficult conversations well.

What People Want

Feel heard
Feel seen
Feel valued
Feel understood
Feel connected
Feel successful



Move Forward or Let it Go?

- Is the conflict inside you?
- What's at stake if you don't have the conversation?
- What's at stake if you do?
- Are you trying to change the other person?
- Is it best to let it go? Why?





Prepare Your SELF

Prepare your opening

Prepare to really listen

Prepare to ask questions

Prepare to share the air

Prepare to show up calm

Prepare to partner and solve

Prepare to preserve the relationship

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Intention

Situation/Impact

Share Views

Problem Solve

Confirm & Thank





- ✓ Describe the problem without judgment
- ✓ Posit a shared goal
- ✓ State your intention
- ✓ Invite them to partner in problem solving

Sample Openers

I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.

I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.

I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

I need your help with _____. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," follow up with her.

I think we have different perceptions about _____. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.

I'd like to talk about _____. I think we may have different ideas about how to _____.

I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____. I really want to hear your thoughts/feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

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Share Views & Stories

- ✓ Restate your intention for the conversation
- ✓ Let them go first
- ✓ Listen to understand their story and perspectives—**NOT** to debate
- ✓ Ask questions out of curiosity
- ✓ Reflect back what you heard/ask for clarification
- ✓ Resist defensive behavior!
- ✓ Offer your story and perspective
- ✓ Try to arrive at and articulate the **“Third Story”** together



Questions to Help Share Stories

- ✓ How do you see this situation? What's your perspective?
- ✓ What about this situation is most troubling to you?
- ✓ What's most important to you?
- ✓ Can you tell me more about that?
- ✓ What does a resolution look like to you?
- ✓ How are you feeling about all of this?
- ✓ What information might you have that I don't?
- ✓ What ideas do you have that would meet both our needs?
- ✓ What's important for me to know?
- ✓ What am I missing/not hearing/not understanding?



Active Listening Helps People Feel Heard

Action	Phrases and Behaviors
Encourage	Don't agree or disagree Use non-verbals: head nods etc. Use verbals: I see, uh huh, mmm
Restate and/or Clarify	Restate the basic ideas—focus on facts “If I understand, your idea is...” “In other words, this is...”
Reflect or Paraphrase	Reflect the basic feelings “You feel that...” “You must feel (angry/sad/frustrated/excited/happy) that...”
Summarize	Restate, reflect and summarize ideas, feelings, and values “These seem to be the key ideas...” “If I understand you, you feel that...” “It sounds like you really care about...”

Help the Other Person Hear You!

- ✓ “Here’s what I’m thinking...”
- ✓ “My perspective is based on the following assumptions...”
- ✓ “In my experience, this...”
- ✓ “I came to this conclusion because...”
- ✓ “I’d love to hear your reaction to what I just said...”
- ✓ “Do you see the situation differently?”
- ✓ “If I heard you correctly, you are concerned about...
may I share my concerns...”
- ✓ “Yes, I see your point of view, **AND** here’s my perspective...”

Problem Solving Tips

- ✓ Be creative and collaborative
- ✓ Listen AND acknowledge
- ✓ Name dynamic/conflict type
- ✓ Consider what you can offer
- ✓ Decide how to evaluate the possibilities
- ✓ Decide how to decide
- ✓ Co-create the solution
- ✓ Document the agreement





Tips for Success

- ✓ Two minutes
- ✓ Confirm positive intention
- ✓ Acknowledge any awkwardness
- ✓ Actively listen
- ✓ Address behaviors and attributes—not intentions
- ✓ Don't go down rabbit holes
- ✓ Let defensiveness pass
- ✓ Acknowledge your contribution
- ✓ Control body language and vocal tone

Confirm, Commit and Give Thanks

1. Acknowledge and appreciate the other person and their partnership in the conversation

- ✓ *I appreciate how open you were to hearing my thoughts...*
- ✓ *Your ideas for next steps were helpful...*
- ✓ *I appreciate how honest you were with me...*

2. Recap next steps

3. Commit and follow through to doing what you agreed to do

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Closing Thoughts

- ✓ Begin from a place of genuine curiosity
- ✓ Focus on what you're hearing. Listen more than you talk.
- ✓ Be direct
- ✓ Abandon blame/work for solutions
- ✓ Don't put it off
- ✓ Approach with positive intention and an open, curious mind
- ✓ Preserve important relationships



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