

# Difficult Conversations

Stop avoiding them and get to the heart of the matter



# Let's begin with why do we avoid these conversations

- They are time consuming
  - The preparation
  - The conversation itself
- They are emotional
  - Potentially relationship damaging
  - Their responses are unpredictable
  - People will lash out at times in their defense

What does this have to do with Safety?

# Safety Culture

- It is developed
- Differs from most peoples regular thought processes
- Requires regular feedback
- Needs real consequences to reinforce the new learning



# Let's begin with why do we avoid these conversations

- They can elevate conflict in the workplace
  - Perception of employees of others behaviours
- These are not situations where we would choose to be if not necessary
- They can take an emotional toll on an individual
- The employee involved is valuable





# So what can go wrong if we avoid these conversations???

- People can get injured
- The problems escalate, continue, and create issues for other employees
- More people become involved
- Potential legal implications
- Employee turnover, sick time, stress leaves
- Feeling of favouritism

# But what if we tackle this head on

- We can handle them poorly
  - Non-productive
  - Do not address the concerns that resulted in the meeting
  - Have parties leave feeling worse than when they arrived
- We can handle them well
  - Productive
  - Addressed the concerns and parties accepted responsibility
  - Parties leave with a clear understanding of the expectations



# How to handle these discussions well

- Be prepared (collect facts, review all available information)
- Schedule the meeting
- Have clearly defined goals in mind, share them at the beginning of the meeting
- Ask for input
- Review the outcome, and set SMART goals
- Follow-up
  
- But it isn't that easy

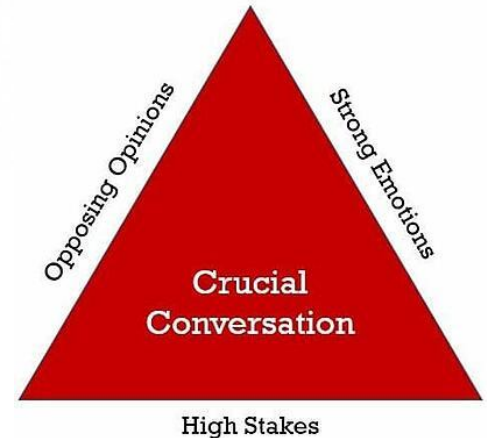
# Crucial Conversations

A discussion between two or more people where:

- The stakes are high (or believed to be by the person)
- Opinions vary
- Emotions run strong

We typically handle these conversations by:

- Avoiding them
- Facing them and handling them poorly
- Facing them and handling them well





# Two Responses to Crucial Conversations:

Fight ← or → Flight

or

Silence ← to → Violence





## If we go to silence:

- We avoid – we steer clear of sensitive subjects; quickly change the subject
- Don't say anything – we withdraw or leave
- Blame the group, hoping the message will hit the right target
- Looks of disgust
- Sarcasm – we mask our true feelings; we sugarcoat



## If we go to violence:

- We verbally attack – we are threatening or belittling
- Act like we know everything
- We discredit others
- Use the power of the boss to force our way
- Control – we force our views by cutting others off, speaking in absolutes, changing subjects and in turn not giving others a chance to share their view
- Subtly manipulate
- We label or stereotype



# Dealing with a difficult conversation

1. Present the issue or concern
2. Empathetic Listening
  - This is very important to the person
  - Even though this may be routine for you, you should not make any less of the issue for the complainant
3. Explain, Inform, Redirect
  - Be aware of your body language
  - You speak volumes before you open your mouth
4. Mutual Exploring of Options & Consequences
  - Let the person take an active role in the solution to their problem





# Dealing with a difficult conversation

## 5. Timed Verbal Intervention

Wait for the right time to speak

Venting is communication at a heightened state of excitement (30 sec. Maximum)

This allows person to blow off some steam

## 6. Sidestep

Ignore comments that have to potential to create conflict

# Dealing with a difficult conversation

## 7. Challenge

Challenge comments directly relating to the process (especially those that bring the company into disrepute)

Without challenging there is a misconception of agreement

Suggest to people what to do without telling them what to do (avoid words like “relax, chill, cool off”)

# Dealing with a difficult conversation

8. Deflection –deflect insults
9. Mediation (assess)
10. Plan
11. Action
12. Debriefing (ensure confidence)
  - This is a good training opportunity



## Key Components of Conflict Resolution:

There are 4 key components to conflict resolution:

- Controlling emotional responses
- Seeking understanding
- Identifying needs and common interests
- Seeking mutual benefit or purpose



# Body Language

- Beware of the message you send without speaking
  - Facial expressions
  - Body language





# The desired outcome

- People will never improve without feedback
- Safety culture
  - It is developed
  - Differs from most peoples regular thought processes
  - Requires regular feedback
  - Needs real consequences to reinforce the new learning
- These conversations become less and less frequent as the culture spreads

# Some real life examples:

- Questions?

