

The Transformative Power of Conflict:

Preparing for Difficult Conversations

STEP 1. INTERNAL DIALOGUE

Think through your issue

- Sort out your situation and your experience (what is the “real” problem/issue, not the symptoms).
- What have you contributed to the conflict? Do both sides perceive a conflict?
- What impact has the situation/conflict had on you? How does it threaten your relationships?
- Explore your emotional footprint (what emotions do you bring to the issue).
- What trigger points may make this issue challenging for you to discuss?
- How do you keep this an “I” conversation (accountability language), rather than focusing on “you” (accusatory/attacking language)?

STEP 2. INTERNAL DIALOGUE

Examine your purpose & decide how to move forward

- What do you hope to accomplish by having this conversation?
- How can you shift your stance to support learning, sharing, and problem-solving?
- If you don’t raise this issue, what will the outcomes/impacts be for you?

STEP 3. EXTERNAL DIALOGUE

Share your story

- Invite the other party to a conversation and let them know what it will be about. Do not blindside them; convey positive intent.
- Agree on a timeline and the rules (e.g., keep your discussion concise and on point, use first-hand examples, no perceptions/assumptions based on hearsay).
- Share your story and intention uninterrupted and let the other person do the same. Listen without anticipating your next response.
- After both sides have presented their stories:
 - Ask clarifying questions.
 - Acknowledge outcomes if current situation continues.
 - Share feelings and impact(s) for both sides.
 - Acknowledge your role in the situation and that you want things to change.
 - Agree to both work on the resolution.

STEP 4. EXTERNAL DIALOGUE

Problem Solving

- Create options that meet both sides’ most critical concerns/interests. What does the best-case scenario look like? What’s realistic?
- Develop standards for what should happen. Remember that standards cannot be one-sided or behaviors half-hearted for lasting change to occur.
- Agree on how to keep communication channels open to put solutions in place.

STEP 5. EXTERNAL DIALOGUE

Follow-up & Measuring Success

- Do not assume that the solution is the end point; it is only the beginning. Consider how to measure the successful outcomes of what you put in place.
- What do you agree you will both commit to do if things do not appear to change?