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Hard Conversations

A protocol for emotionally charged conversations



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ועד החינוך דשיקאגו

Having Hard Conversations: A Protocol

Have you been anxious about speaking to a student, to the parent of a student, or anyone else? Learn to navigate emotionally charged conversations, with a clearly focused conversation-protocol. Discover how to approach complex and delicate situations in a way that will increase mutual respect and lead to positive results.

Outcome

Participants will be able to:

- 1.** Convey a singular message in all your communication
- 2.** Describe the possible difficulties in having a hard conversation
- 3.** Identify a protocol for hard conversations to reach a positive outcome
- 4.** Practice having a hard conversation

Possible scenarios for Hard Conversations

Student:

Why do you always pick on me? There are so many rules, every little thing I do I get punished right away, I'm not allowed to do anything in this class.

Parent:

My child is the sweetest child, she really wants to please, but she is a very sensitive kid. When she is under pressure she usually shuts down and does not cooperate, kindness works best with her.

She tells me that she is bored in class because she gets it right away. There are kids in class who always bother her. If you can give her compliments and rewards it will go a long way, I think that will stop her misbehavior.

Teacher:

I'm concerned about this student's academic progress, she seems to be very much behind grade level, she doesn't participate in class discussions, she doesn't complete class work. I hardly see any effort on her part, she simply seems disinterested. I don't know what to do anymore, nothing seems to work.

Reflection

What constitutes a hard conversation for you?

With whom?

Reflecting on a **“Hard Conversation”** that you had (or need to have)

Identify your own area of discomfort in having a hard conversation

Read the handout on page 6-7:

“Why we hesitate to have hard conversations.”

Highlight those points that resonate with you.

What emerged?

Why we hesitate to have hard conversations

Possible Reasons

1. A desire to please
 - I don't want to look mean.
 - I want people to like me and respect me.
2. Personal Safety
 - I want everything to remain OK – no anger or tears.
 - I would rather avoid any emotional or physical pain.
 - I am intimidated. This person is very aggressive. It is scary to deal with them.
3. Personal comfort.
 - I like it easy emotionally and with work – no waves.
 - It will take so much effort to do what I need to do if this starts.
4. Fear of the unknown
 - I'd rather live with the status quo than take on the unknown.
5. No sense of urgency (for you)
 - Not that many people are affected so let's not make a big deal if it.
 - Let's give it time and see if things change. There's no big crisis yet.
6. I don't fit in here
 - The culture doesn't address things head on. Why should I?
7. Waiting for the perfect moment
 - I can't do it until I know more about the person or about the issue.
8. Perfectionism
 - I don't have the right words yet.
9. Distrust of oneself and others
 - I don't trust my gut to be right.
 - I am too judgmental, and maybe this is just another example.

10. Lack of authority
 - I don't have enough internal role authority or perspective, and I have NO external role authority. So, who am I to bring it up?
11. Distrusting our own judgement
 - It is their choice to do what they want. Who am I to tell them what is best?
12. Fear of kicking somebody who is already down
 - I don't think they will be able to take it. It will overwhelm them.
13. Too big a shift in role expectations
 - I thought I was here to simply do my job. Now I am supposed to also focus on something personal and internal?
14. This wasn't in the job description
 - I thought I was supposed to work with people who already know what is expected. I didn't expect to deal with these kinds of issues.
15. Too close to home
 - This is a small neighborhood. My kids play with their kids. I need to keep this relationship the way it is and not rock the boat.
16. Conflict with beliefs or values
 - I don't agree with the program that I'm being asked to implement, and I just feel awkward.
17. Fatigue
 - I just don't have the energy today.
 - I just cannot fight this battle again.
 - They already think I am too pushy
18. Personality or intent
 - He/she is a nice person overall.
 - He/she didn't mean it.

Hard conversations

Default strategies

- Apply the force of reasoning
- Ignore the resistance
- Give in to the resistance
- Manipulate the resister
- Use our power or position to get the resister to comply

Goal

Planning

1. Outcome

2. Consult

3. Expect the unexpected

4. Scheduling

Hard Conversation – Outcome Map

1. Paraphrase the issue and get it into a clear, concise statement.
2. What would you like to see happening instead of what is currently happening? What is your best outcome?
3. What specific and measurable things would you like to see or hear when the issue is resolved? Focus on objective and observable behaviors.
4. In order to implement these behaviors, what knowledge, skills, or awareness would this person need?
5. What are some of the specific things you could do to address the needs? Given what you know about the person, what language or actions might help them with the desired behaviors?
6. In order for you to carry out the strategies, what do you need? What type of personal support do you need?

4-Step Conversation

1. Connect

2. Working

3. To work on

4. Next Steps

Active Listening - Language stems

- What I'm hearing you say...
- In other words...
- Let me see if I understand...
- Can you give an example?
- I'm not sure I understand what you are saying. Did you mean that....?
- Could you explain that a bit further?
- I'd like to make sure that I understood
- So, are you saying...?
- I wonder...
- What might be causing this?
- In what ways might this be the same/different than...
- Has there previously been a similar experience?
- What do you think?...
- What do you think would happen if...?
- How did you reach that conclusion?
- One thing I noticed to be effective is...
- Something to keep in mind...
- one thing we've done/noticed in the past is...
- Something you might consider trying is...
- There are several approaches...
- Sometimes it's helpful if...
- Which of these ideas might work best for you?

Attitudes for effective listening

- You must truly want to hear what the other person has to say.
- You must view the other person as separate from yourself with alternative ways of seeing the world.
- You must genuinely be able to accept the other person's feelings, no matter how different they are from your own.

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Thank you!

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