



What conversation do you regularly avoid at work?

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Difficult Conversations

in the workplace





Definitions

Conversation:

A face-to-face exchange of information and views between two people

Difficult Conversation:

A conversation whose primary subject matter is potentially contentious and/or sensitive and may elicit strong, complex emotions that can be hard to predict or control

Goal: To provide you with advice and tools to better handle difficult conversations



Common Difficult Conversations

Asking for a raise

Regularly being late

Inappropriate behavior


Being micromanaged

Admitting you screwed up

Feedback, especially on poor performance

Rules violations

Asking for a promotion



Worksheet: What was a difficult conversation you were involved in recently?

What was the conversation about?

Who initiated the conversation?

What about that subject made it difficult?

What went well?

What did not go well? Why?

Was the result what you wanted?
Why or why not?

We will come back to this conversation later.

Considerations and Tips

Delaying a difficult conversation can make the conversation harder and the desired outcome harder to obtain.

Humans share a longing to be heard, known, and respected. Being known is at the top of the list.

Think about the attention you bring to your conversations. While someone is talking, what are your thoughts? Are you looking at them or something else?

Consider that others do not always understand how their behaviors affect others.

Be consistent and always keep things confidential.



What we hear

Unfortunately, one of the most common outcomes of communication is misunderstanding.

We "hear" what others say based on our perceptions.

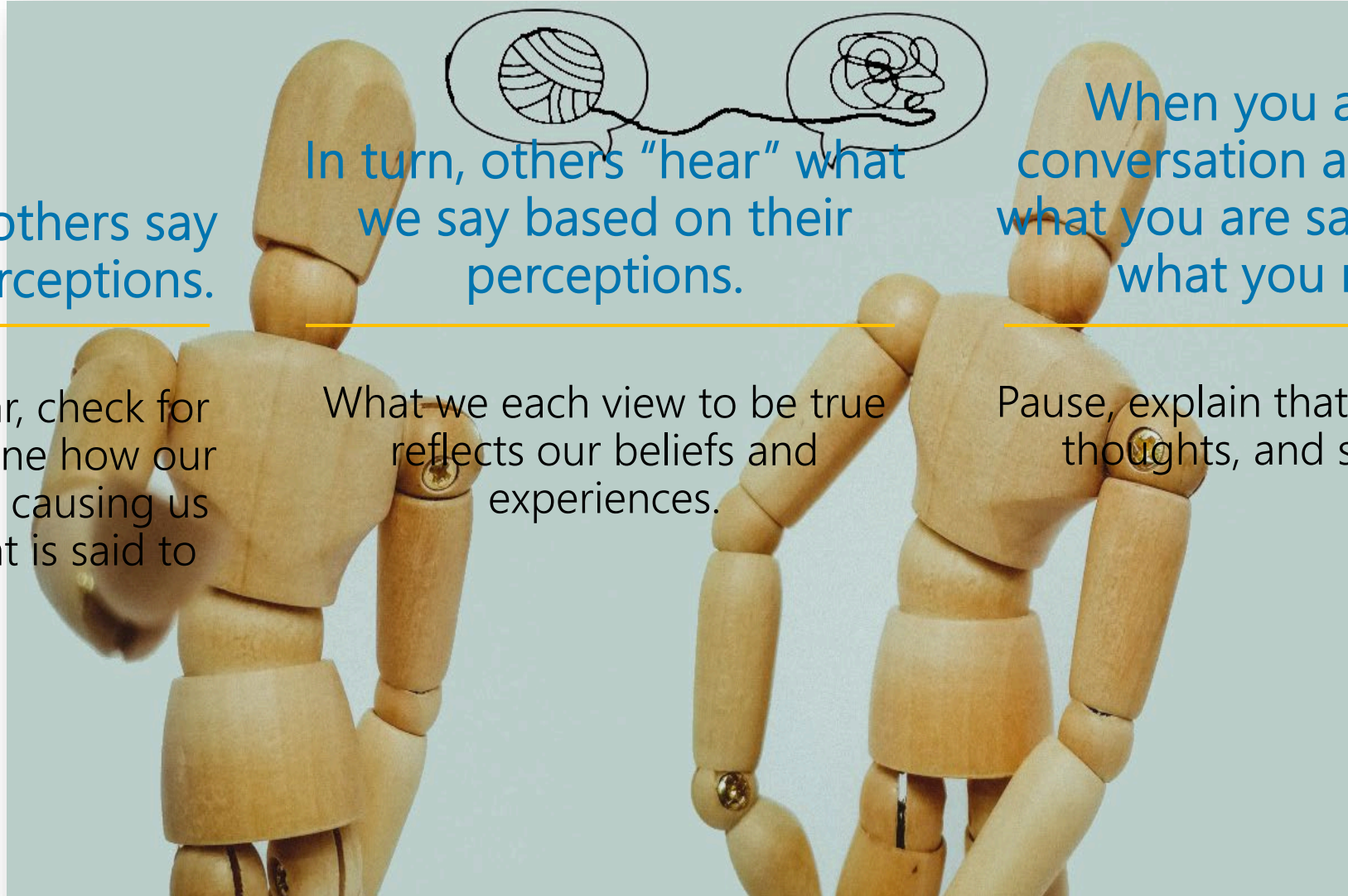
We need to be clear, check for meaning, and examine how our experiences may be causing us to misinterpret what is said to us.

In turn, others "hear" what we say based on their perceptions.

What we each view to be true reflects our beliefs and experiences.

When you are in a conversation and realize what you are saying is not what you mean

Pause, explain that, collect your thoughts, and start over.





“While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a company, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can.”

—SUSAN SCOTT, *Fierce Conversations*



PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION

1

Name the issue
Be concise and do not sugarcoat it

2

Define your desired outcome
Consider acceptable alternatives

3

Bullet point relevant information
Stick to facts

4

Decide who needs to be at the meeting

5

Schedule the meeting



**During the
Meeting**



1

Turn the ringer off on your desk and cell phones and close your computer

**GIVE YOUR FULL
ATTENTION TO THE
MEETING**





2

Keep emotions in check

**LEAVE THEM OUT OF THE
CONVERSATION**





3

Lay out the issue as you prepared ahead of time

**EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF
THE PROBLEM**

**GIVE THE BULLETED
INFORMATION**



4

Shut up and listen.

INVITE THEM TO SHARE THEIR VIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Do not jump in with responses
Allow them to talk, just listen.

Keep the conversation slow
Use silence.

Consider repeating back what you heard
Remember, we hear based on our experiences.





5

Decide when you need to begin discussing solutions

It will probably be after they suggest an outcome

Let them know your desired outcome. Discuss the implications if nothing changes.



6

TAKE ACTION

Decide on the best course of action to begin resolving the problem. Set firm follow-up dates to provide accountability.





THE CONVERSATION

1

Give the meeting your full attention.

2

Keep your emotions in check

3

Lay out the issue as your prepared ahead of time

4

Shut up and listen

5

Discuss solutions. Consider alternatives

6

Define a course of action, set follow-up dates




Debrief

- Was I effective at expressing the issue clearly and concisely?
- Did I keep my emotions in check?
- Did I listen to understand or just to respond?
- Did I get a satisfactory outcome?
- What could I have done better?

What follow-up needs to be done? Is it on the calendar?





Worksheet: What was a difficult conversation you were involved in recently?

Is there anything you would do differently before the meeting?

Would it have been more productive at a different time?

What could you have done to change the outcome of the meeting?

Is there anything else you would change based on what you learned today?

Does anyone want to share their conversation?

WHEN WE AVOID
DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS,
WE TRADE
**SHORT-TERM
DISCOMFORT**
FOR
**LONG-TERM
DYSFUNCTION.**

-Peter Bromberg-

Questions?

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