



NHRMA 24

86TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE + TRADESHOW

CS19

Having THAT Conversation: Mastering the Art of Difficult Conversations



Having THAT Conversation: Mastering the Art of Difficult Conversations

Presented by: Kimberly Petersen, MA, LMHC, PCC

Difficult Conversation Defined

“Anything you find hard to talk about.”

- Stone, Patton, and Heen

Some Difficult Topics

- Admitting an error/mistake
- Setting boundaries for time/workload
- Observing disrespectful communication or microaggressions
- Discussing politics in the workplace
- Stereotypes based on generation (or other group membership)
- Threats of violence—was it *really* a threat?





What Do You Notice
Happening in Your Body?

**What If You Could Feel
Calm?**

What's Happening in Your Body?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

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Difficult Conversations

[HOW TO DISCUSS
WHAT MATTERS MOST]

Updated with Answers to the 10 Most Frequently Asked
Questions About Difficult Conversations

DOUGLAS STONE ■ BRUCE PATTON ■ SHEILA HEEN
OF THE HARVARD NEGOTIATION PROJECT

With a foreword by Roger Fisher, coauthor of *GETTING TO YES*

Preparing for **THAT** Conversation

Each
Conversation
is **Three**
Conversations

- The What Happened Conversation
- The Feelings Conversation
- The Identity Conversation

1st
Conversation

**What
Happened?**



Shifting to a Learning Conversation: What Happened?

FROM:

Who is right?

(Me, of course!)

TO:

Explore each other's stories

- We have different information, interpretations, conclusions
- Move from certainty to curiosity
- Embrace both stories – “and stance”

Empathy is powerful!

Shifting to a Learning Conversation: What Happened? (2)

FROM:

What are the intentions?
(We assume we know)

TO:

Don't assume they meant it:
disentangle intent from impact

- Assumptions about intentions are often wrong
- Good intentions don't sanitize bad impact

Shifting to a Learning Conversation: What Happened? (3)

FROM:

Who is to blame?
(Defensiveness results)

TO:

Abandon blame: think in terms
of contributions to the situation

- Blame prevents understanding, hinders problem solving
- Understanding contribution on both sides encourages learning and change



- Exploring Each Other's Story
- Intent v. Impact
- Abandon Blame

What do you notice happening in your body/heart/being?

What's Happening in Your Body/Heart/Being?

Nobody has responded yet.

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2nd
Conversation

Feelings



Shifting to a Learning Conversation: Feelings

- Have your feelings
(or they will have you)
- Unexpressed feelings can:
 - Leak or burst into the conversation
 - Make it difficult to listen
 - Take a toll on self-esteem and relationships
- Explore your emotional footprint
- Describe feelings carefully (vs. venting)

Feelings:

What are some healthy ways to release feelings?



Healthy Ways You Release Feelings

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

3rd
Conversation

Identity



Shifting to a Learning Conversation: Identity

- Ask yourself what's at stake?
- 3 Core Identities
 - Am I Competent?
 - Am I a Good Person?
 - Am I Worthy of Love?
- 3 Things to Accept about Yourself
 - I will make mistakes
 - My intentions are complex
 - I have contributed to the problem

Shifting to a Learning Conversation: Identity (2)

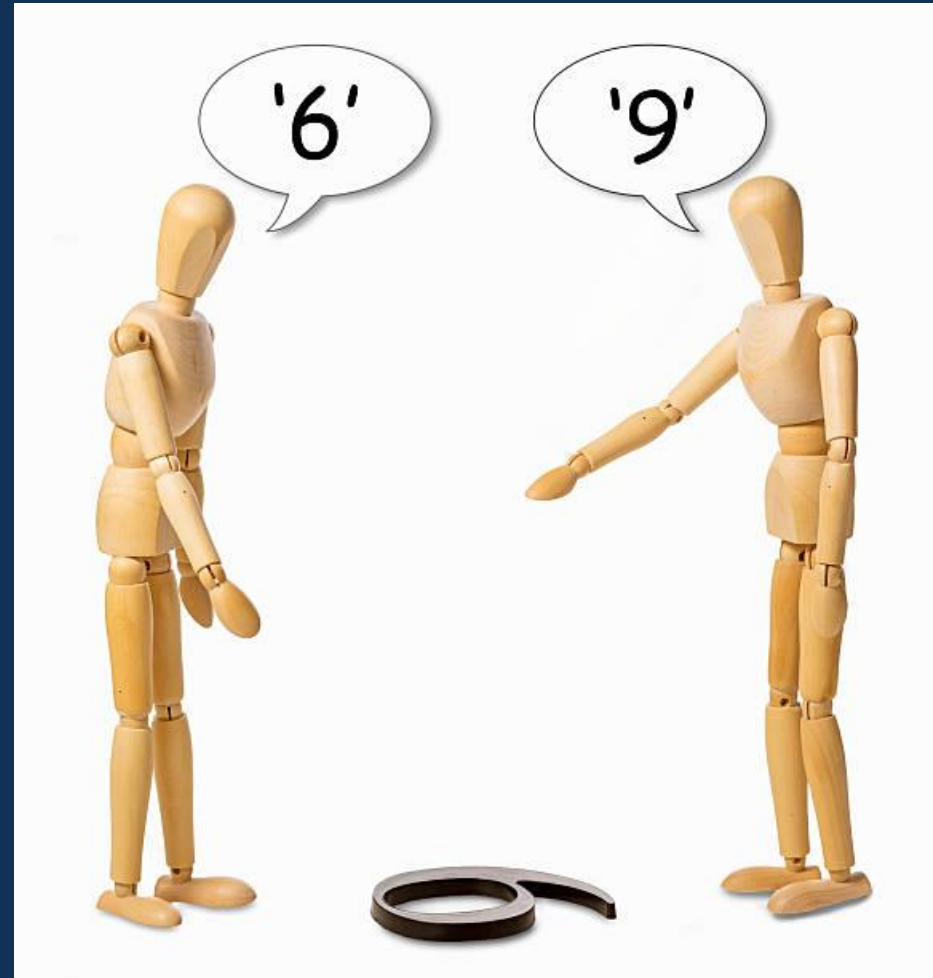
- During the conversation, regain your balance
- Let go of trying to control their reaction – use empathy
- Prepare for their response
- Imagine it's 3 months or 10 years from now – what have you learned?
- Take a break – 10 mins to 24 hours

There are
Stages in the
Conversation

- Start from the Third Story
- Explore Their Story & Yours
- Problem Solving

Stages

**The Third
Story**



Having THAT Conversation: The Third Story

- Start from the Third Story
- Extend an invitation
- Begin the conversation from a neutral observer's view – differences in stories
- Think like a mediator
- Not right or wrong, not better or worse – just different
- Describe your purpose
- Invite, don't impose
- Make them your partner in figuring it out
- Be persistent

Stages

**Their Story
& Yours**



Having THAT Conversation: Explore Their Story & Yours

- Listen to their story
- Tell your story with clarity
- Take a stance of curiosity – focus on authenticity
- Pay attention to and manage the commentator in your head
- Use inquiry, paraphrasing and acknowledgment – active listening
- Don't present conclusions as "the truth"
- Share where conclusions come from
- Don't exaggerate with "always" and "never"

Stages

**Problem
Solving**



Having THAT Conversation: Problem Solving

- Take the lead
- Reframe, reframe, reframe
 - Truth -> Different stories
 - Accusations -> Intentions & impact
 - Blame -> Contribution
 - Judgments, characterizations -> Feelings
- Listen
- Name the dynamic
 - What's getting in the way of the conversation?
- Begin to problem solve
- Invent Options - be creative!
- Look to standards for what *should* happen.
- Keep communication open

Having THAT Conversation: Applied

- admitting an error/mistake
- setting boundaries for time/workload
- observing disrespectful communication or microaggressions
- discussing politics in the workplace
- stereotypes based on generation (or other group membership)
- threats of violence—was it *really* a threat?



Your Difficult Conversations

Nobody has responded yet.
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Applying the
Framework

- The What Happened Conversation
- The Feelings Conversation
- The Identity Conversation
- (Purposes)
- Start from the Third Story
- Explore Their Story & Yours
- Problem Solving

**What are
your
Takeaways?**



**Questions?
Comments?**





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