

For some of us, communication is a piece of cake; however, for some people, imagining themselves engaging in a conversation on complicated subjects with someone else gives them goosebumps.

However, you will face difficult discussions that you cannot evade; so, grasping how to manage a tough discussion is crucial. Thanks to the writers, we have hints and cases to assist you to improve at difficult conversations.

In this review, the typical dangers that ruin various challenging talks are spotlighted. You will find answers to your question of how to prevent them. Lastly, the chapters give you a structure to guarantee that you will handle conversation on difficult subjects without deviating from the topic and you will not be hurt.

Chapter 1 - Do not escape from tough conversations because you are afraid of the repercussions.

The path to obtaining what you desire passes through conversation; however, not every conversation is as easy as some others are.

A challenging discussion is something difficult for you to talk about. Generally, topics of discussion are race, religion, sexuality, and gender politics; however, it can include all types of discussion that you are nervous talking about – for example, having a conversation about your husband or wife to give up cigarettes.

Uneasy conversations tend to be evaded since the consequences aren't foreseeable and the chances of you getting hurt are huge. You think about it, seeking what will be the best decision: Would it be good to address this problem? Or should I simply leave it as it is? When you decide to undertake the former one, the situation may heal. Nevertheless, there's an uncertainty that the results would not be desirable.

Suppose that you made your mind that you'll have a conversation with your neighbor on his dog's neverending barking that deprives you of sleep. There is a chance that he'll show empathy toward you and will not let his dog outside his home at night. But there is also another chance that he'll consider your behavior as an exaggeration and feel resentment toward you.

No matter how the situation seems, never avoid the conversation – even when it's hard.

We don't desire to get into hard discussions, but neither do we desire to hear dogs barking in the middle of the night. It is often better that you take up these conversations when they can perhaps improve your life. So, when something disturbs you, don't avoid the conversation. Rather, grasp the ways of talking effectually, which you're going to grasp how to do it in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter 2 - Tough discussions include accusations, feelings, and identity.

Any challenging conversation includes three factors occurring simultaneously: the “What Happened?” Conversation, the Feelings Conversation, and the Identity Conversation.

The “What Happened?” Conversation means arguing about who’s right, taking for granted what your opposition's purposes are, and putting the blame on him or her.

In fighting over who’s correct, both people think they’re right and the other person is wrong. You can put forward an assertion saying “The things you uttered yesterday were completely improper,” but the opposition can utter the same sentence for you.

Apart from claiming you’re correct, you might start making accusations of adversary purposes. Suppose your partner sent you cigarettes down the canalization through the toilette. Rather than accepting the possible scenario that they wanted to help you give up smoking, you assert they were ill-intended, saying that “You threw away my cigarettes because you want to control me!”

It is also probable to wind up holding the other person responsible for things of which they are innocent: “ Because of you I couldn't arrive in time to work since I pulled over near the shop to buy cigarettes.”

the Feelings Conversation is the second type, which covers only emotions.

Conversations are difficult because they involve emotions. Often those are disappointment, anger, frustration, fear, and hurt. Perhaps you feel disrespected by a colleague, or they feel hurt because you said or did something insensitive.

The third type is the Identity Conversation, and that’s about our character.

Let’s use the same dog scenario here You made your mind to talk with your neighbor; however, even bringing the scene to your mind is enough to cause discomfort for you since you see yourself as someone amiable. When you want to talk about the problem, you run the risk of being stamped as truculent – confronting your opinions about yourself. As a disparity of this kind causes you to question yourself, you can be tempted to escape from a discussion to preserve your self-image.

As we know now what makes up a tough discussion, we are also cognizant of areas where enhancement is necessary. In the subsequent chapters, we will precisely elucidate how to change difficult conversations into a Learning Conversation.

Chapter 3 - Change the “What Happened” Conversation into a Learning Conversation by concentrating on curiosity, impact, and contribution.

A Learning Conversation is a conversation where we seek to solve something, keeping arguments, accusations, suppression of our feelings or doubts regarding our own out.

Then, let's try the Learning Conversation method on the three sorts of difficult conversations discussed above, beginning with the “What Happened?” Conversation.

Initially, make efforts to understand your partner's perspective. Rather than “Why is this person so unreasonable?” think, “Interesting, the situation is the same, yet this person arrives at entirely different conclusions. I am curious about his standpoint. Is there something about which I have no knowledge but she has? Or has she taken into account other viewpoints that haven't occurred to me?” The feeling of offendedness will not affect you as it used to do and you will demonstrate a sincere curiosity when your ideas are confronted

Next, don't think that the person you're talking to is malicious. Rather, observe what they do.

Let's say your friend says that you look jaded. You may get the impression that she meant to offend you; however, don't be so quick to judge. Maybe, she's worried about you and tries to assist you.

Finally, don't accuse others and rather begin to see how others contribute.

Holding other people responsible is a dead-end – it only centers around judgment and provokes indignation.

Alternately, take a seat with the opposition and seek to solve the situation mutually. Pose him the question, “What did we do to make things come to this point?” and after that, “How can we together solve the situation and go to our own ways?”

Chapter 4 - Enhance the Feelings Conversation by following, negotiating, and putting your feelings into words.

It isn't straightforward coping with feelings, and what is even more arduous is opening up about your feelings. If they carry the risk of upsetting us, we can go further and restrain them. But, the Learning Conversation can be useful for us in tackling tough feelings in three simple stages.

Primarily, discover what's actually going on in our inmost feelings. It is possible to perform it by tracing your emotional footsteps. This is how you respond emotionally, led by something you hold good to reveal and something you think had better be retained by no one but you.

Pose questions to yourself like, “What did make you classify some emotions as improper?” “What was the way of dealing with your emotions in your youth?” and “Were you reprimanded when you acted ‘needy’ in your moment of needing affection?”

Following your emotional footsteps will help you recognize the feelings you undergo

Second, you need to negotiate those emotions. Emotions aren’t stable – they transform when our understandings transform.

As in the “What Happened?” Conversation, you have to pay your attention to curiosity, impact, and contribution.

If you’re incessantly quarreling with your spouse, you might want to think about posing yourself the questions: “Do I think that I know what his purpose is? Do I accuse him and overlook my impact?”

After reconsidering your presuppositions, your feelings regarding the situation will begin to change. If you felt resentment toward your mother since she constantly tells you to find a job, think about it then, “Is it all a punishment by her since I am unsuccessful? Or does she fret about my happiness?” In the case of the latter being true, reflect on how this influences your feelings.

The final stage is to open up about how you feel, whether they are good or not, in a considerate way.

When you bring up your suppressed feelings at the opposition, the already-tough discussion will get tougher. When it is about accurately explaining how you feel, you should allow both the good and bad to come out.

Rather than saying to your mother, “I’m mad at you,” say to her, “I appreciate your care; however, I am mad as well since I said to you that I dislike arguing about my search for work, and you still open up this topic, and I feel myself like a failure.”

Chapter 5 - Pay heed to the complexities of the Identity Conversation and abstain from dominating others’ reactions.

You probably know yourself well. However, you are likely to consider your own in absolute terms: able or incompetent, rude or nice, whether you can be loved or not.

Absolute terms like the ones above are constraining since everything hasn’t got only two opposite ways, there are middle grounds as well; so, thinking everything has two opposing ways only will cause you to feel disoriented regarding who you are.

Rather, take into account that your identity encompasses various parts. Consider the distinct features that you consider essential – features of which you feel proud and you are afraid lest you lose them.

Suppose that your most favorite trait regarding your identity is loyalty: When you are working in your office, a rival company approaches you with a very charming deal, but you dither to say yes to the offer as you'll turn into a treacherous person then.

The moment you understand which components of your identity are most indispensable for you, you may start building complexities.

Breaking the chains of the typical black-and-white tactic to identity problems, you have to confront your logic that signing the deal turns you into a treacherous person. You've been working many years for your boss and haven't been earning the wage you deserve, yet you're disloyal now? Why you take into consideration this deal is because you intend to make your family's life better, so you can show your loyalty to your family.

Many situations aren't black and white, they have middle grounds, as does our identity. Thus, save your time and energy rather than being dragged into an argument whenever your thoughts about your identity are challenged.

You can also improve the Identity Conversation by keeping yourself steady in the course of the conversation. How can we do it? Quit the idea that you can hold the opposition's reactions in check.

Quitting that notion renders it more straightforward to concentrate and stay on track. You may assume that when you utter something in a special manner your partner won't be mad. Actually, there is no way to foretell what their response will be. When you acknowledge this fact, reactions you didn't anticipate won't cause you to feel bothered.

Chapter 6 - An impartial Third Story is what you need.

Although tough discussions require craftiness to start, you have to begin the topic somehow.

Good advice would be to avoid beginning to tell your story.

Your standpoint is rarely a fruitful way to initiate the talk since the person you're conversing with might consider his self-image being attacked

In the course of a tough discussion, you may utter something such as, "The things you talked regarding me with your friends disturbed me," which they might misconstrue as, "You either were disloyal to me on purpose by saying that, or you were disloyal to me inadvertently as you're inconsiderate." The consequence is that your opposition either takes

a defensive or aggressive position in order to maintain their perception of being a considerate and faithful partner.

Then how can one bring up problems for discussion while avoiding giving rise to hurt or getting the opposition to take a defensive stand? The solution is to start with a Third Story.

What do we mean by Third Story? This story is told from the perspective of a disinterested spectator. It stresses the disparity of the stories of each person whom the discussion concerns.

Suppose that a problem between you and your flatmate surfaced because he never washes the dishes. You can get into the conversation saying that "I do the dishes every time," at the same time your flatmate can say, "Why not talk about you being so bitchy about cleaning the dishes." Both of these aren't good seeds to yield a productive discussion at the beginning; hence, the Third Story is important: "We have different thoughts regarding cleanliness and different preferences when it comes to washing dishes." No one judges such a comment, therefore no one feels they have to get defensive. Through this method, both of you will be able to make an arrangement pleasant to each of you.

By sticking to these suggestions, you can turn any tough discussion into a sensible, fruitful one.

Difficult Conversations: How To Discuss What Matters Most by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen Book Review

We evade difficult conversations as we are afraid of what might be the consequence. It is possible to convert The "What Happened?", Feelings and Identity Conversations into Learning Conversations by concentrating on curiosity, opening up about your emotions, and avoiding accusing one another. With these in mind, applying the Third Story method will be helpful for you and the opposition to hold a sensible discussion.

Listen to your inside voice.

The inside voice is a little sound in your head making comments about whatever you hear, do, and read. Your inside voice might get louder and suppress the other people's voices. Rather than silencing it, first, hear what it tells you; so, you'll realize what your genuine feelings are and teach yourself to pay more heed to what others say.

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