

Changing the Conversation

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FACT or CRAP

- 93% of people avoid critical conversations.
- 67% of employees avoid difficult conversations with their boss.
- 53% of managers avoid challenging issues with direct reports.
- Interpersonal conflict costs American companies approx. \$359 Billion dollars (based on a \$17.95/hourly wage)

C. Northcote Parkinson...

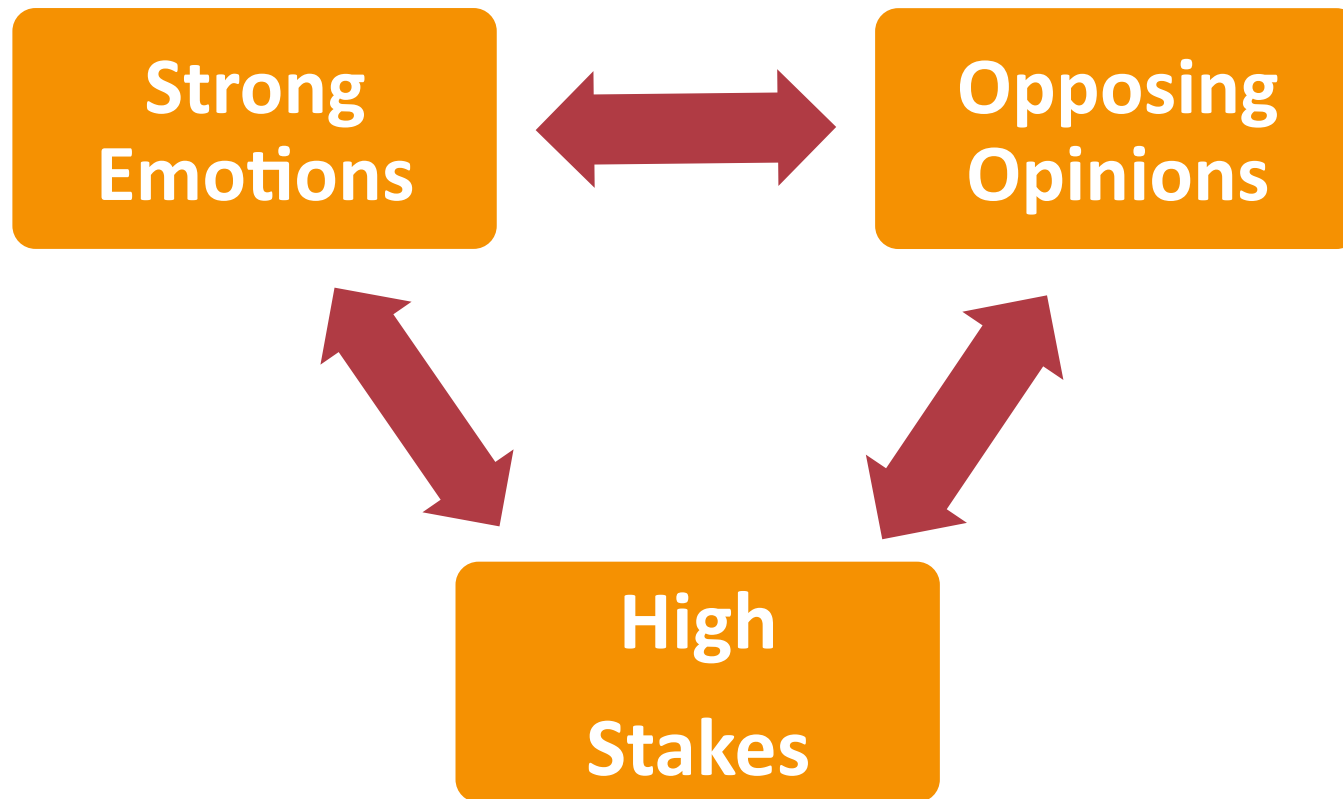
The void created by the failure to communicate

is soon filled with poison,

**nonsense and
misrepresentation.**



The Emotion – Logic Battle

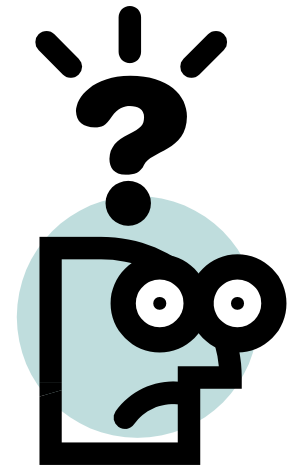


What Do We Get?



Why Do Conversations *Go Bad*?

- Our inability to handle the emotions of others
- Our inability to see how –*even in a small way* – we may have contributed to the problem
- Our lack of preparedness & understanding of human dynamics and what keeps a conversation from getting derailed.



Characteristics of People

- ❖ Everyone has a collection of beliefs & behaviors that stem from cultural influences & personal experiences.
- ❖ People want life to be logical but we are in general, reactive beings. We need to know that we are not alone in our feelings.
- ❖ Human beings do not often react well to shame.

Characteristics of People

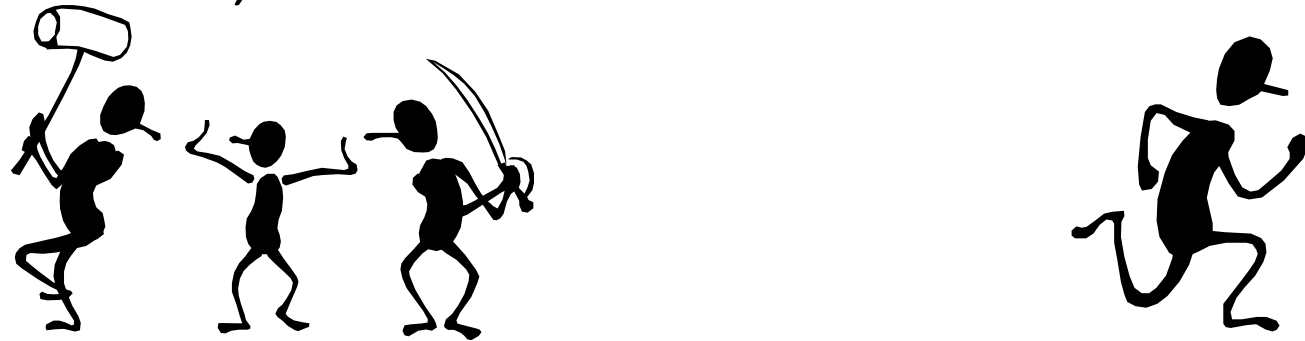
- ❖ Everyone wants to be heard & understood,
... to be treated fairly,
... to feel useful and valued.

- ❖ Everyone needs hope.



Why Does *Emotion* Win?

- In *fight or flight*, adrenaline causes blood to rush from our brains to our limbs.
- Higher level reasoning section of our brain gets less blood, i.e. less oxygen = **STUPID!**
- Under pressure, our brain is drunk on adrenaline.



As Motives Change...

Behaviors Deteriorate

Focus changes to

Winning

Blaming

Punishing

Keeping the Peace



Implications

- Our capacity for making assumptions is an essential skill.
- We *ASSUME* that others see the world as we do.
- We usually ‘leap’ through the phases quickly & don’t test our reasoning – or observations.
- We *ASSUME* that our conclusions are the truth.
- We hold our assumptions and beliefs closely.

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN???

SEE &
HEAR

TELL A
STORY

FEEL

ACT

Triggers or Hot Buttons

- It makes me angry when people say...
- I don't like it when people...
- I feel offended when...
- I think it's rude to...
- At work, I wish people would...
- It makes me crazy when...
- If people would only...

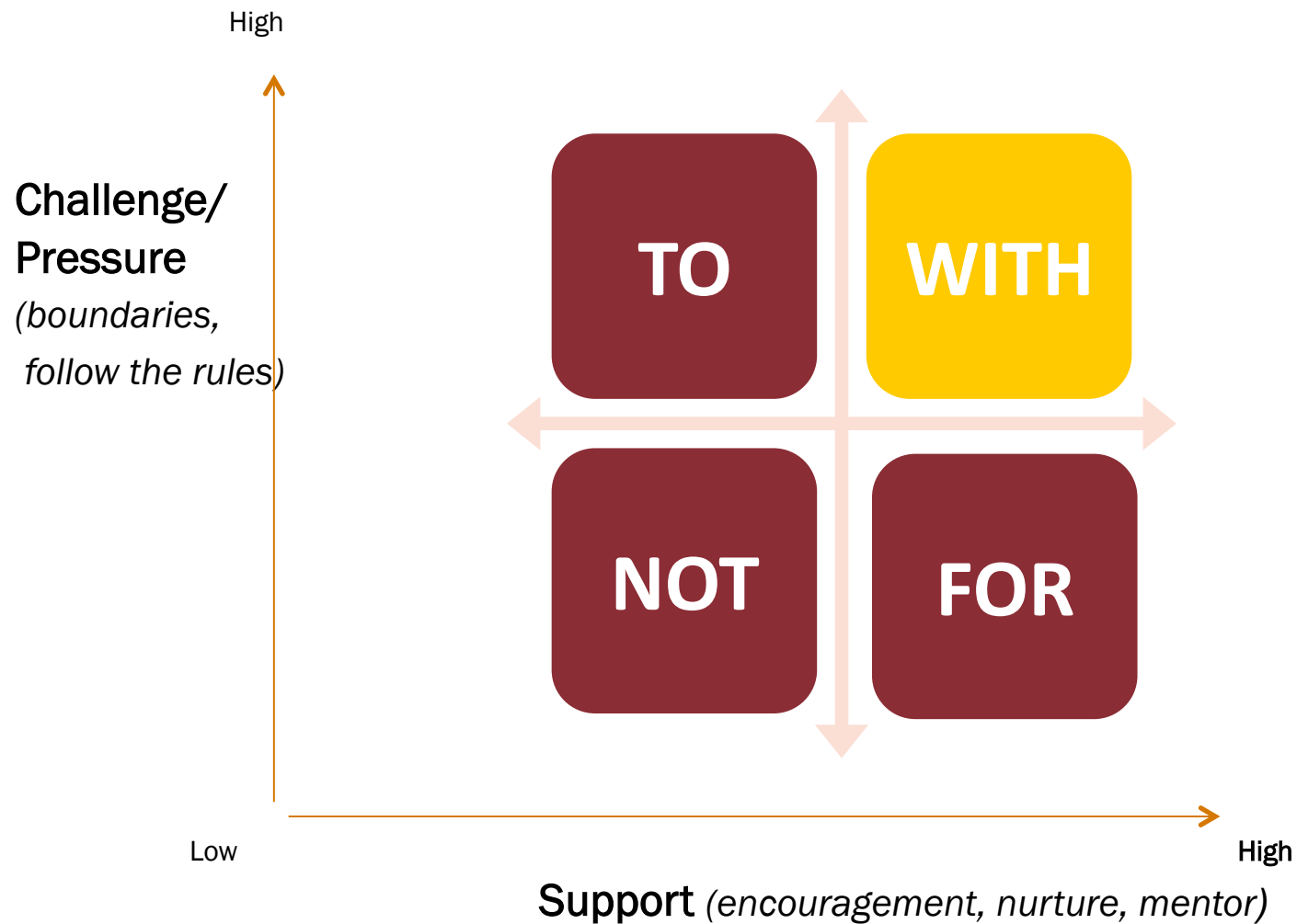


Components of Communication

Mehrabian's Research, UCLA



SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW



Adapted by Mast 2011 from McCold & Wachtel, 1990 & Glaser, 1969



Impact

- Positive
- Negative

Outcome

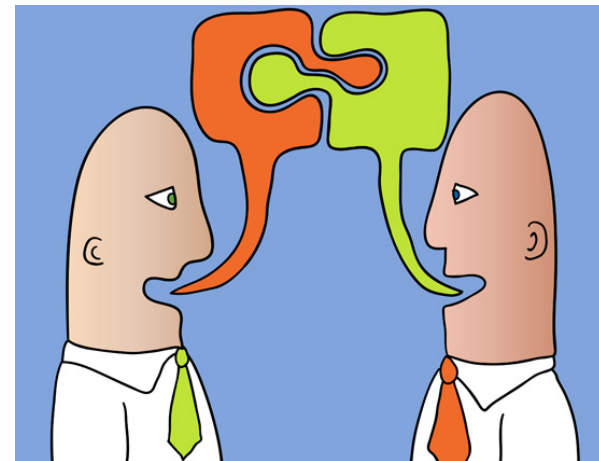
- What do I want/
need?
- What *don't* I
want?

Intent

- What is my
Intent?
- Intent = WHY

The GUIDING Principles

- **One** : Facilitate Listening & Speaking
- **Two**: Change the Conversation
- **Three**: Look for Ways Forward



Principle One – *Listening & Speaking*

Strategy #1: Move from Certainty to Inquiry

- What is your understanding of the situation?
- What is most important to you in this situation?
- Why is that important?
- What do you think a good outcome might look/sound like?
- What are the obstacles for reaching that outcome?
- What would you like to see happen now?
- Why is that important to you?

Principle One – *Listening & Speaking*

Strategy # 2: Differentiate Needs, Interests and Strategies

WE ALL...

- Have the same basic ***needs***
- Have differing ***interests*** arising from those needs.
- Choose different ***strategies*** to meet those needs and interests.

Example 1

Strategy **I'm going to get a job as a teacher.**

Interest I love children and I want fulfilling work.

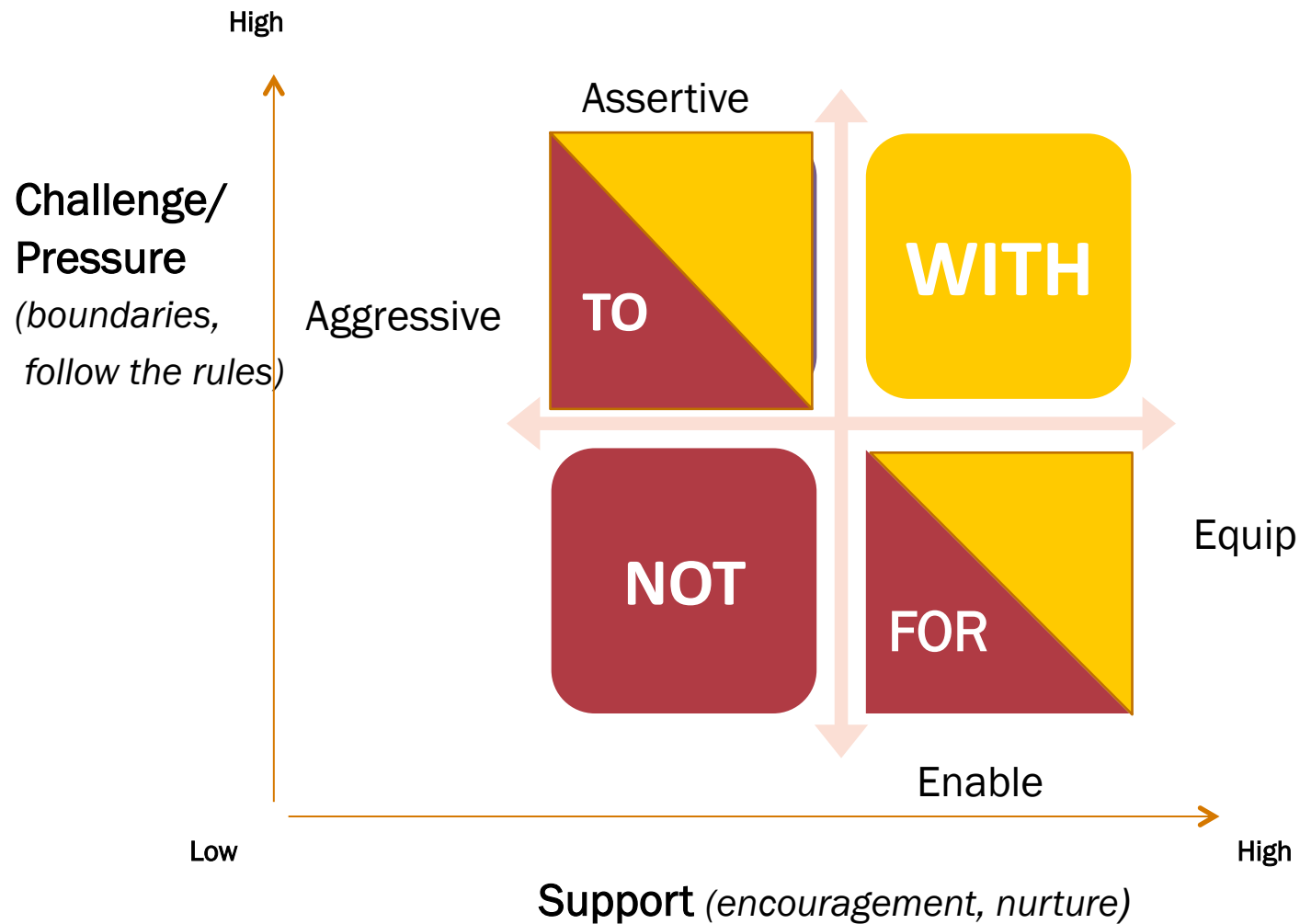
Need Contribution

Strategy **Assault rifle ownership should be restricted.**

Interest I want to live in a place where I don't have to be afraid.

Need Safety

SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW



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Example 2

➤ **Strategy masquerading as a *Need*:**

“I need you to be home by 8 pm every night.
You are staying out to late.”

Actual Need behind Strategy:

“I want you to be able to get enough sleep and
get your homework finished.”

➤ **Strategy masquerading as a *Need*:**

“I need a gun; this neighborhood is crazy!”

Actual Need behind Strategy:

“I need to feel safe.”

Principle One – *Listening & Speaking*

Strategy #3: Remove the Attack

“You’re constantly undermining my authority with the kids. Just because you don’t have the guts to follow through on setting limits doesn’t mean the kids don’t need them.”

What’s the Need/Interest/Strategy?

Possible translation:

“I think the kids need to have more limits set. I worry that we are sending mixed messages and I feel angry and frustrated when you don’t support my attempts to put some limits in place.”

Fill in the Blank Practice

Remove the Attack

When *(the triggering event)* happened, I felt *(my feeling)* because *(my need/interest)* is really important to me.

Would you be willing to *(request a do-able action)*?

Principle Two- *Change the Conversation*

Strategy #1: Develop Curiosity

- What is really going on here?
- What have I not yet understood?
- What is the main obstacle?

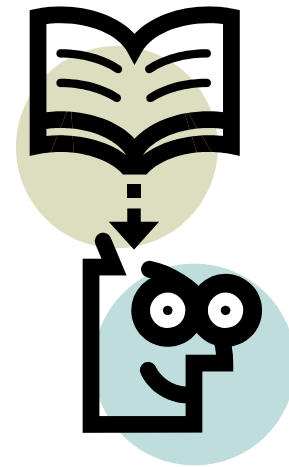


This is a great time to use the RP questions and challenge assumptions.

Principle Two – *Change the Conversation*

Self regulation - Skills for Mastering Your Story

- Slow down
- Retrace your path
- Notice your behavior
- ID what you are feeling
- Challenge your story/ your assumptions
- Get back to the facts –what evidence do I have that my story is real?
- Tell the rest of the story (*re-write the story*)



Principle Two: *Changing the Conversation*

Strategy # 2: Shift the conversation from strategies to needs

Take a step back and check that you have understood what is important to the other person.

Have you made your interests clear as well?

Change your approach.

Principle 3: *Changing the Conversation*

Strategy #3: Assume useful dialogue is possible

Broaden the conversation by asking about the other person's experiences and how those experiences shaped their beliefs. Help to move the conversation from arguing about the beliefs themselves.

“So, it looks like we have different ideas about saving money for our future. What are your thoughts about how we should prioritize our finances? What are you most concerned about?”

Principle 2: *Changing the Conversation*

Mom's need: A morning routine that provides a relaxing start to the day and gets everyone where they need to be on time.

Her statement/actions: "Would you just get up? Stop acting like a 4 year old! I am so sick of this. You are driving me crazy!"

Mom has chosen blame & attack. Likely outcome:

Re-write the conversation.

Principle Three: Look for a Way Forward

Strategies 1-4

- ✓ Acknowledge Conflict
- ✓ Seek Options & Solutions
- ✓ Be Explicit in Agreements
- ✓ Expect & Plan for Future Conflict.



Principle 3: *Look for a Way Forward*

“It’s easier for me to stay engaged if we talk about this in private instead of in front of others.”

“How about we make a hand signal when I start talking too loud and then I’ll know to lower my voice?”

“I have a hard time concentrating when you yell at me. Could you share what’s on your mind without yelling or wait until you can calm down?”

Our Future – *A Civil Society*

Conflict can be both useful and destructive.

When we see conflict as a moment of opportunity then we approach others with the desire to listen, engage, address needs and work together toward solutions.

It's a choice.

It's a habit.



What do you want your future to hold?



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*Workplace Culture, Employee & Leadership
Development and Personal Growth.*