



ASU Sandra Day O'Connor
College of Law

Arizona State University

Lodestar Dispute Resolution Center



DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS **IN BUSINESS**

ARIZONA
COMMERCE AUTHORITY



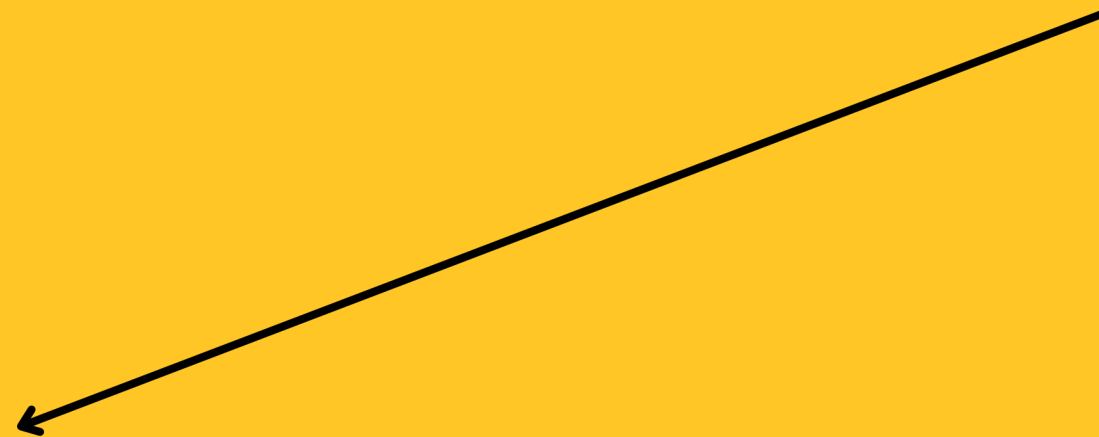
COMMUNICATION

**MESSAGE
INTENDED**

**MESSAGE
SENT**

**MESSAGE
RECEIVED**

**MESSAGE
UNDERSTOOD**





**We live in a time
where we listen
not to hear the
other person, but
to respond.**



META PROCESS

THE IDENTITY
CONVERSATION

EMOTIONS

WHAT?

ME

THE FEELINGS
CONVERSATION

THE WHAT HAPPENED
CONVERSATION

MIRROR NEURONS

When you remain calm and open others will respond more calmly

BREATHE

Notice physical fight or flight reactions

FEELINGS

Let go of trying to control other's feelings – you can only control your own

PROBLEM SOLVING

When our limbic system/mid-brain is activated, our problem-solving/creativity is compromised



MINDFUL MANAGEMENT

**Prepare... don't
just anticipate it
will go well or
poorly**



LISTENING - ATTENTION

01

REDUCE
DISTRACTIONS

03

BE MINDFUL

05

LISTEN IN CONTEXT

02

SET ASIDE BIAS

04

BE CURIOUS

06

NON-VERBAL QUES

NON-VERBAL

- Nodding Head
- Eye Contact
- Physical Contact
(touching hand or shoulder)
- Body Positioning

VERBAL

- Brief (mhmm... okay)
- Thank you
- Speak clearly



LISTEN - ACKNOWLEDGE

**Everyone wants to
feel heard and
understood.**



LISTENING - INVITE

QUESTIONS

Ask relevant questions, with a focus on probing and open questions

SILENCE

Use silence when appropriate to allow depth to the conversation

ENCOURAGE

Use statements to encourage speaker to continue

PROMPTS

Don't force the conversation forward. Use minimal prompting.



C

Compartmentalize

Divide conversation into parts –
what topics are safe to discuss &
which are emotionally charged



A

Ask

Acknowledge other's response
and be curious – not furious



N

Normalize

What has happened to you or
others has happened before



D

Discuss

Factual and neutral
Remain empathic, even if you
don't agree



I

Incentivize

Provide benefit for change
Express confidence in finding
solution



D

Disengage

End the conversation with
positivity and normalcy

UNDERSTAND V. AGREE

You don't have to agree to understand

BAD NEWS

Don't leave bad news until the end – start there

BLAME

Don't become defensive or place blame – focus on future

NEGATIVE MINDSET

Don't come into the conversation with a negative mindset



DON'TS OF DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Questions?

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Website

<https://law.asu.edu/centers/lodestar-dispute-resolution>

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