



IN COMMUNICADO

Communicate Connect Motivate

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Becoming a Doctor of Difficult Conversations



Choice Words

Lagom

(lag-OHM)

No one really teaches us how to have difficult conversations.

Maybe we ask for advice first -- in part because we want someone to be on our side and join us in casting aspersions on the person who created the need for this talk (be honest!). Or we think about how to start the conversation -- and end up over our heads five minutes into it.

I think it helps to have a system. This one works for me.

-- Lynne

A GAP MD

This is the acronym I use to remember each step.

A = Audience

Think about the person you will be talking with. What's his relationship with you? (A direct report, a boss, a colleague, etc.) What does he want? What is he afraid of? What problem does he need to solve?



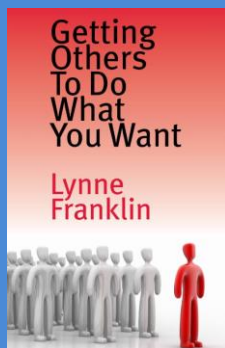
Then sort through your judgments about him. (Is he a whiner or long winded, which makes you impatient?) Take a deep breath -- in your brain and your body -- and decide to set these aside rather than just reacting.

G = Goal

What is your goal for having this conversation? Choose something positive -- getting someone off your back isn't enough. Then put write it in a single

This Swedish word translates into "just right." It alludes to avoiding conspicuous success and humiliating failure -- two things you want to sidestep when having difficult conversations!

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sentence. For example: I have a 20-minute conversation with Mark, and we come up with three new ideas to reduce gossiping in the office.

A = Ask

When you're in the conversation, ask good questions and listen to the other person. I believe people feel chronically unseen and unheard. Your spending time focusing on him will give you a good start on improving any situation. This also shows you're interested and willing to help.

Just as important, chances are that you may not know everything about what's happening. Mark might share information you didn't have, which will be useful.

P = Paraphrase

Play back what you hear. This ensures both of you are clear about and agree on what's happening. It's another sign of your interest. It also gives Mark the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings.

Watch your natural tendency to interpret information. Use Mark's exact words -- rather than substituting your own (and the judgments that travel with them). We've all been angered by someone who twisted our words, and that's counterproductive in a situation that may already have its own emotional landmines.

M = Make Suggestions

Start with Mark's. This short circuits complainers. People are less likely to make you listen to their unending list of injustices if they know -- before they walk in your door -- that you'll ask for their suggestions on how to fix a problem.

When it makes sense, offer some of your own ideas - - but always after you have heard from the other person. People are much more invested in following through on solutions *they've* had a hand in creating.

In the Next Issue ...



Practicing Impression Management

D = Decide Next Steps

Too many difficult conversations don't reach the "call to action" phase. Either nothing happens, or someone (figuratively) runs screaming from the room. Knowing what you know now, you and Mark should decide what makes the most sense to do next.

Each of you should leave the session with a clear agreement on what you will do and by when. Then make sure you keep your promise.

Taking a Different View

You'll never wake up in the morning and say, "Gee, I hope to have a difficult conversation today!" But using this "doctor of persuasion" approach increases the chances three positive things will happen:

1. The exchange will be less difficult because you're prepared for it (through the audience and goals steps)
2. The other person will feel your good will (through asking and paraphrasing)
3. The two of you will be invested in the solution and know what to do (through making suggestions and deciding on next steps)

Give both of you the chance for a better outcome!

About Wordsmith

We work with organizations that want to use top-notch communication skills to increase their performance, productivity and profit.

- **Speaking, workshops and coaching** that give you tools you can use right away
- **Strategies and plans** that help you turn difficult business communications into opportunities to succeed
- **Written and spoken communications** created to reach your corporate and marketing communication and business development goals

Be the most persuasive person in the room. Let Lynne show you how.

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Do you need a **speaker who can make your people more persuasive -- while they have fun doing it?**

Do you have a **corporate, marketing or financial/investor communication challenge or project?** Spend up to half an hour with Lynne -- on the phone or in person. She promises to give you some ideas and tactics you can use right away. The two of you can determine if she's the right solution to help beyond this -- and if not, she will do her best to find someone who is.

To schedule this, contact her at 847-729-5716 or lynne@yourwordsmith.com.