

# Difficult Conversations: What You Need to Know

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*Dedicated to empowering people*



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*“difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right. They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values.”*

— Douglas Stone, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*





# Introduction

For difficult colleague, vendor or customer:

- ① Key elements
- ② Start the conversation
- ③ Deal with defensiveness
- ④ Difficult people





# ① Key Elements

1. Perceptions
2. Conclusions
3. Reactions



# It's About Perceptions

1. We rarely analyze our perceptions

1. Are based on our values & beliefs

2. Are based on “rules of life”



3. Both perceptions matter



# Conclusions: What Happens When..

1. We have incomplete information
2. We conclude intention from impact
3. What we don't know we tend to make up



# Reactions Rule

1. Because our perceptions clash
2. Values and beliefs are threatened
3. We are communicating during stress



# Reactions Rule



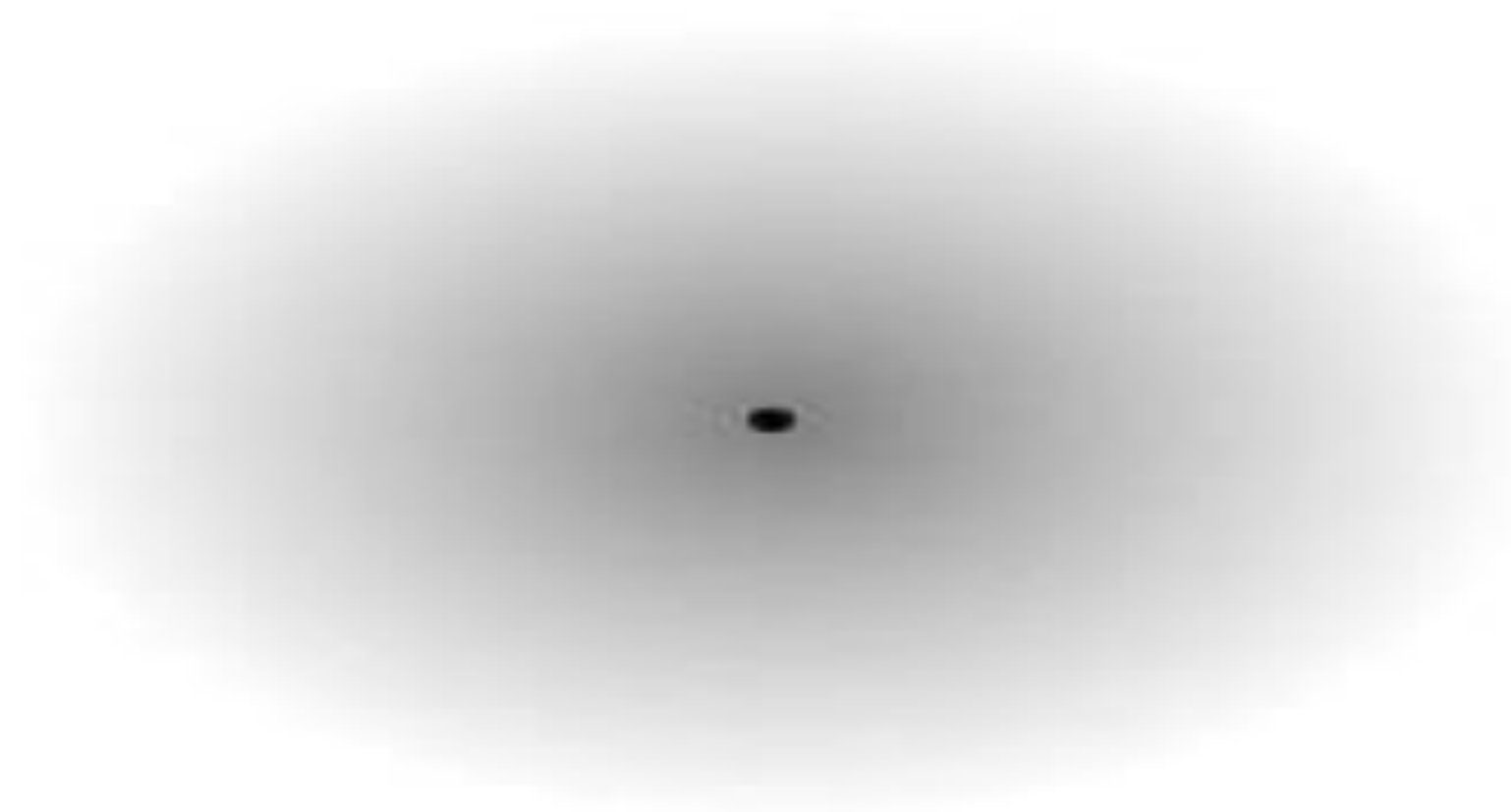
*Remember, under  
great stress,  
**memory &  
rationale  
thought** are the  
first to go!*



# F.A.E.

- Fundamental Attribution Error
- Self-serving Bias
- Balancing Your Perception







# Let's Try It!

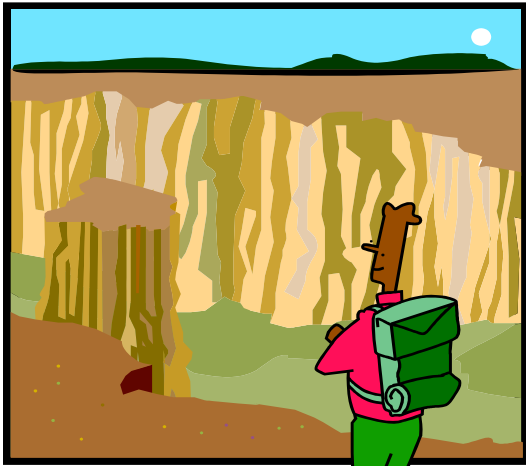


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## ② Starting the Conversation

✓ Canyons and Collisions

✓ Identify Behaviour



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# Let's Try It!



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# Your Forever Homework



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# ③ Dealing with Defensiveness

- Outward Expression
- Inward Expression



# Key Responses for Defensiveness

- ✓ **Do NOT react!**
- ✓ **Stay CALM!**
- ✓ **Don't take the BAIT!**



Let's Try It!

The Power of the Pause...

Breath...

Stay on track...



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# More Key Responses

- ✓ The distracting pen
- ✓ Self-talk
- ✓ Stay curious



# Tips for Outward Expressive

## Relaying Information

$$1 + 1 = 2$$



$$1 + 1 = 11$$



# Tips for Outward Expressive

## Approach

- Voice tone gentle but direct
- Do not show you are intimidated



# Tips for Outward Expressive

- Focus on other's words to avoid reacting to tone
- Manage your body language; it will help keep you calm.
- **PUMPKIN!**



# Tips for Outward Expressive

- Validate and Park



- “...not this way”
- “did you mean it that way?”



# Tips for Outward Expressive

- Set and maintain boundaries



# Assertive Confrontation

Use your body language to present an assertive response:

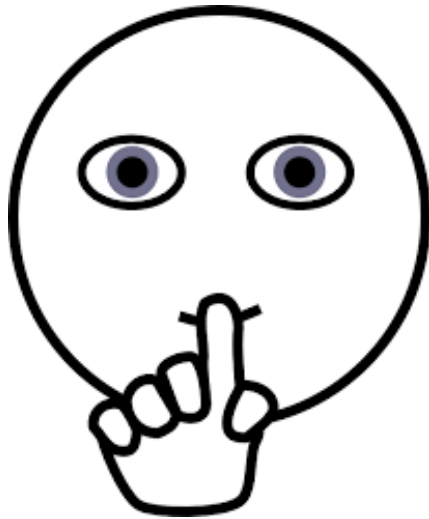
- Square shoulders
- Chin parallel to the ground
- Back straight
- Stand to meet the person
- Good eye contact
- Avoid closed arms, hands on hips, etc.





# Tips for Inward Expressive

- Don't fill in silences
- Ask a closed-ended question,
- Shift to open-ended

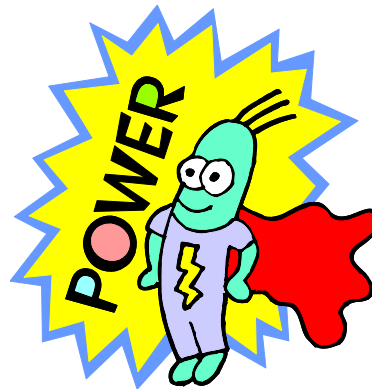
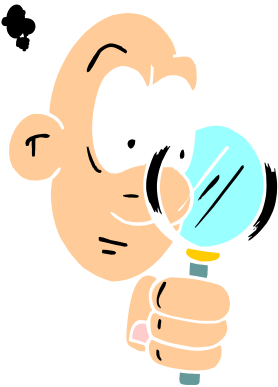
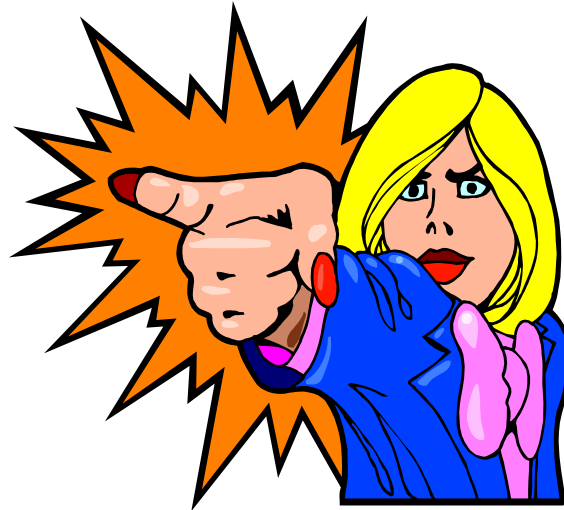


# Tips for Inward Expressive

- “If you did know...”
- Acknowledge the silence, ask an open-ended question
- Speak about the impact of their behaviour



# Difficult People



**Pre-sale!**

# SOFT SKILLS *for* TOUGH COOKIES

A RECIPE  
FOR IMPROVING  
COMMUNICATION

GENELLA MACINTYRE



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# Your Action Plan



# Thank You!

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