

Executive Skills Series: Exercising Leadership Through Difficult Conversations

ESS: ELTDC-Student Manual

1st Edition, 3rd Printing-July 2017



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Acronyms

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of any National Fire Academy (NFA) course is a complex process aimed at providing students with the best possible learning opportunity we can deliver.

There are many players in course development, each of whom plays an equally important part in its success. We want to acknowledge their participation and contribution to this effort and extend our heartfelt thanks for making this quality product.

The following people participated in the creation of this course:

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COURSE GOAL

The goal of this course is for the student to identify and apply skills for having difficult conversations as they relate to exercising leadership when addressing adaptive challenges.

AUDIENCE, SCOPE AND COURSE PURPOSE

The target audience for all of the executive skills series courses consists of fire and emergency service personnel in positions of authority who have an opportunity to exercise leadership. At a minimum, the students must be assigned to a supervisory level position, such as Company Officer (CO).

In this course, students are introduced to the adaptive leadership model and how the model relates to being in an authority role and exercising leadership. They will examine the sources of power and the limits of one's authority.

Students will also focus on defining difficult conversations and recognizing when they should occur, analyzing the elements of a difficult conversation to appropriately plan for its conduct, and examining how their own personal feelings and traits play a role in a difficult conversation.

Additionally, students will examine several tools for conducting difficult conversations, including the Ladder of Inference tool, the Left-Hand Column tool, and the Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy tool.

Finally, students will focus on conducting a difficult conversation. They will learn several leadership skills that are useful in conducting a difficult conversation, and go over the five steps for conducting a difficult conversation.

By the end of the course, students will have developed a plan for conducting a difficult conversation in their lifetime.

The purpose of this "Executive Skills Series: Exercising Leadership Through Difficult Conversations" (ESS: ELTDC) course is to provide knowledge and skills in having difficult conversations in order to exercise leadership when addressing adaptive challenges.

GRADING METHODOLOGY

The required performance to successfully complete the course is attained by completing the examination with a grade of "C" or better by correctly answering a minimum of 18 out of 25 questions.

The following course grading plan should be used to determine the assigned course grade for each student in the class.

Minimum Number of Questions Answered Correctly	Number of Incorrect Answers	Letter Grade to be Assigned to Student
23	0-2	A
20	3-5	B
18	6-7	C
17 or less	8 or more	F

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SCHEDULE

TIME	DAY 1	DAY 2
8:00 - 9:00	Introduction	Unit 4: Creating a Plan for a Difficult Conversation: Analyzing the Elements
9:00 - 9:10	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
9:10 - 10:20	Unit 1: The Adaptive Leadership Model Activity 1.1: A Difficult Conversation Activity 1.2: All Problems Are Not Alike	Unit 4: Creating a Plan for a Difficult Conversation: Analyzing the Elements (cont'd) Activity 4.1: Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 2
10:20 - 10:30	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
10:30 - 12:00	Unit 1: The Adaptive Leadership Model (cont'd) Activity 1.3: Adaptive Challenge Scenarios	Unit 5: Tools for Difficult Conversations Activity 5.1: Using the Tools
12:00 - 1:00	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
1:00 - 2:15	Unit 2: Authority and Power	Unit 6: Conducting a Difficult Conversation
2:15 - 2:30	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
2:30 - 5:00	Activity 2.1: Identifying the Authorizing Environment Unit 3: Creating a Plan for a Difficult Conversation: Identifying the Issue Activity 3.1: Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 1	Unit 6: Conducting a Difficult Conversation (cont'd) Activity 6.1: Conducting a Difficult Conversation

Note: Times listed reflect approximate instructional time blocks and may be adjusted to meet individual course preferences.

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FIREFIGHTER CODE OF ETHICS

Background

The Fire Service is a noble calling, one which is founded on mutual respect and trust between firefighters and the citizens they serve. To ensure the continuing integrity of the Fire Service, the highest standards of ethical conduct must be maintained at all times.

Developed in response to the publication of the Fire Service Reputation Management White Paper, the purpose of this National Firefighter Code of Ethics is to establish criteria that encourages fire service personnel to promote a culture of ethical integrity and high standards of professionalism in our field. The broad scope of this recommended Code of Ethics is intended to mitigate and negate situations that may result in embarrassment and waning of public support for what has historically been a highly respected profession.

Ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character. Character is not necessarily defined by how a person behaves when conditions are optimal and life is good. It is easy to take the high road when the path is paved and obstacles are few or non-existent. Character is also defined by decisions made under pressure, when no one is looking, when the road contains land mines, and the way is obscured. As members of the Fire Service, we share a responsibility to project an ethical character of professionalism, integrity, compassion, loyalty and honesty in all that we do, all of the time.

We need to accept this ethics challenge and be truly willing to maintain a culture that is consistent with the expectations outlined in this document. By doing so, we can create a legacy that validates and sustains the distinguished Fire Service institution, and at the same time ensure that we leave the Fire Service in better condition than when we arrived.



FIREFIGHTER CODE OF ETHICS

I understand that I have the responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that reflects proper ethical behavior and integrity. In so doing, I will help foster a continuing positive public perception of the fire service. Therefore, I pledge the following...

- Always conduct myself, on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively on myself, my department and the fire service in general.
- Accept responsibility for my actions and for the consequences of my actions.
- Support the concept of fairness and the value of diverse thoughts and opinions.
- Avoid situations that would adversely affect the credibility or public perception of the fire service profession.
- Be truthful and honest at all times and report instances of cheating or other dishonest acts that compromise the integrity of the fire service.
- Conduct my personal affairs in a manner that does not improperly influence the performance of my duties, or bring discredit to my organization.
- Be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.
- Recognize that I serve in a position of public trust that requires stewardship in the honest and efficient use of publicly owned resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles and equipment and that these are protected from misuse and theft.
- Exercise professionalism, competence, respect and loyalty in the performance of my duties and use information, confidential or otherwise, gained by virtue of my position, only to benefit those I am entrusted to serve.
- Avoid financial investments, outside employment, outside business interests or activities that conflict with or are enhanced by my official position or have the potential to create the perception of impropriety.
- Never propose or accept personal rewards, special privileges, benefits, advancement, honors or gifts that may create a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof.
- Never engage in activities involving alcohol or other substance use or abuse that can impair my mental state or the performance of my duties and compromise safety.
- Never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap.
- Never harass, intimidate or threaten fellow members of the service or the public and stop or report the actions of other firefighters who engage in such behaviors.
- Responsibly use social networking, electronic communications, or other media technology opportunities in a manner that does not discredit, dishonor or embarrass my organization, the fire service and the public. I also understand that failure to resolve or report inappropriate use of this media equates to condoning this behavior.

Developed by the National Society of Executive Fire Officers

A Student Guide to End-of-course Evaluations

Say What You Mean ...

Ten Things You Can Do to Improve the National Fire Academy

The National Fire Academy takes its course evaluations very seriously. Your comments and suggestions enable us to improve your learning experience.

Unfortunately, we often get end-of-course comments like these that are vague and, therefore, not actionable. We know you are trying to keep your answers short, but the more specific you can be, the better we can respond.

Actual quotes from student evaluations:	Examples of specific, actionable comments that would help us improve the course:
1 "Update the materials."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The (ABC) fire video is out-of-date because of the dangerous tactics it demonstrates. The available (XYZ) video shows current practices. The student manual references building codes that are 12 years old.
2 "We want an advanced class in (fill in the blank)."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would like a class that enables us to calculate energy transfer rates resulting from exposure fires. We would like a class that provides one-on-one workplace harassment counseling practice exercises.
3 "More activities."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An activity where students can physically measure the area of sprinkler coverage would improve understanding of the concept. Not all students were able to fill all ICS positions in the exercises. Add more exercises so all students can participate.
4 "A longer course."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class should be increased by one hour per day to enable all students to participate in exercises. The class should be increased by two days so that all group presentations can be peer evaluated and have written abstracts.
5 "Readable plans."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plans should be enlarged to 11 by 17 and provided with an accurate scale. My plan set was blurry, which caused the dotted lines to be interpreted as solid lines.
6 "Better student guide organization," "manual did not coincide with slides."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The slide sequence in Unit 4 did not align with the content in the student manual from slides 4-16 through 4-21. The instructor added slides in Unit 4 that were not in my student manual.
7 "Dry in spots."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor/activity should have used student group activities rather than lecture to explain Maslow's Hierarchy. Create a pre-course reading on symbiotic personal relationships rather than trying to lecture on them in class.
8 "More visual aids."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text description of V-patterns did not provide three-dimensional views. More photographs or drawings would help me imagine the pattern. There was a video clip on NBC News (date) that summarized the topic very well.
9 "Re-evaluate pre-course assignments."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pre-course assignments were not discussed or referenced in class. Either connect them to the course content or delete them. The pre-course assignments on ICS could be reduced to a one-page job aid rather than a 25-page reading.
10 "A better understanding of NIMS."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor did not explain the connection between NIMS and ICS. The student manual needs an illustrated guide to NIMS.

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UNIT 1:

THE ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:

- 1.1 *Identify the core processes and dimensions that characterize the adaptive leadership model.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- 1.1 *Identify the characteristics of an adaptive challenge.*
 - 1.2 *Define disequilibrium and its role in accomplishing change.*
 - 1.3 *Distinguish between adaptive and technical challenges.*
 - 1.4 *Identify the distinction between acting in an authority role and exercising leadership.*
 - 1.5 *Identify the dimensions of the adaptive leadership model.*
-

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UNIT 1: THE ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

Slide 1-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the characteristics of an adaptive challenge.
- Define disequilibrium and its role in accomplishing change.
- Distinguish between adaptive and technical challenges.

Slide 1-2

ENABLING OBJECTIVES (cont'd)

- Identify the distinction between acting in an authority role and exercising leadership.
- Identify the dimensions of the adaptive leadership model.

Slide 1-3

I. A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Slide 1-4

A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (cont'd)

The public relations crisis facing today's fire service is directly related to the fire services' attitude of entitlement which developed following the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Slide 1-5

ACTIVITY 1.1

All Problems Are Not Alike

Purpose

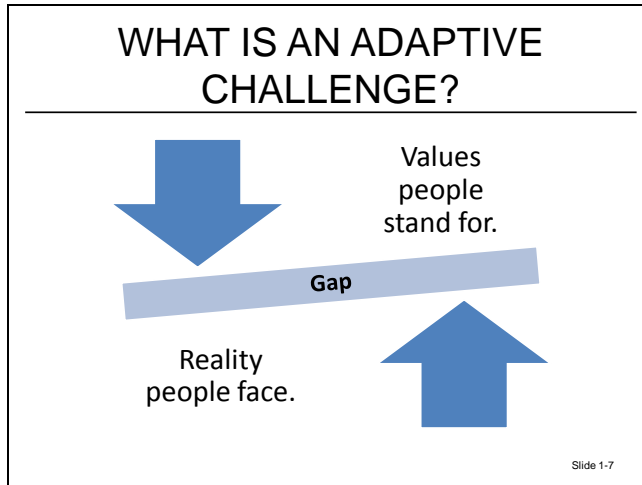
Identify current personal or organizational challenges that involve opportunity for difficult conversations.

Directions

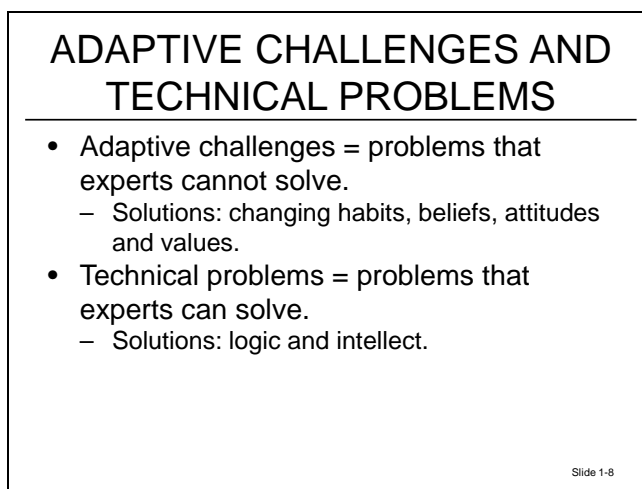
1. Work in your table group.
2. Think of a significant problem that exists either personally or in your current organization and/or community that you are willing to share. This can be either a problem that you or your organization is currently attempting to solve or a problem that has yet to be addressed.
3. Share your problem with the group and list it on the easel pad. Each group member should do the same. You will be allowed 10 minutes for this discussion.
4. After your group has shared its problems among itself, there will be a 10-minute class discussion in which groups will share their problems with the class.

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II. WHAT IS AN ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE?



- A. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky define an adaptive challenge as “the gap between the values people stand for (that constitute thriving) and the reality that they face (their current lack of capacity to realize those values in their environment)” (2009, p. 303).
- B. Another way of looking at an adaptive challenge is to recognize it as a gap between current reality and aspirations which demands a response outside the existing repertoire.

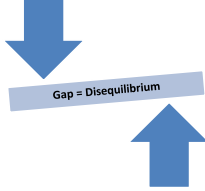


- C. Adaptive challenges and technical problems.
1. Adaptive challenges can be dealt with only by working to shed the priorities, habits, beliefs and loyalties people have so that new ways of addressing the problem can be implemented.

2. Adaptive challenges are not the same as problems that can be solved using current knowledge and skills (e.g., the kinds of knowledge and skills used in one's authority role to deal with technical issues).
3. Problems that experts can solve are technical problems. Technical problems require solutions that involve logic and intellect.
4. Problems that experts cannot solve are adaptive. These are the ones that must be addressed through changes in habits, beliefs, etc.

ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES AND DISEQUILIBRIUM

- Disequilibrium: absence of a steady state.
 - Characterized by increasing levels of urgency, conflict, dissonance and tension generated by adaptive challenges. (Heifetz et al., 2009)
- Adaptive change requires a certain amount of disequilibrium.



Slide 1-9

D. Adaptive challenges and disequilibrium.

1. Disequilibrium is the absence of a steady state, typically characterized in a social system by increasing levels of urgency, conflict, dissonance and tension generated by adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009).
2. Adaptive change requires a certain amount of disequilibrium.


SIGNS OF DISEQUILIBRIUM

- Scapegoating.
- Externalizing enemy.
- "Them and us" mentality.
- Shooting the messenger.
- Avoidance.
- Rationalization.

Slide 1-10

3. Signs of disequilibrium include:
- Scapegoating.
 - Externalizing enemy.
 - “Them and us” mentality.
 - Shooting the messenger.
 - Avoidance.
 - Rationalization.

What are some signs that disequilibrium is occurring related to the problems listed in Activity 1.1?



Slide 1-11

SIGNS OF ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE

- Problems persist after technical solutions applied.
- Emotions run high.
- Many people and/or factions with unknown positions.

Slide 1-12

- E. How do you know you have an adaptive challenge?
- Problems persist after technical solutions have been applied.

2. Emotions run high.
3. There are many people and/or factions with unknown positions.

SIGNS OF ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE (cont'd)

- The solutions will result in changes in behavior (e.g., losses).
- A consultant cannot fix the problem.
- Work avoidance instead of addressing the issue.

Slide 1-13

4. The solutions will result in changes in behavior, such as losses.
5. A consultant cannot fix the problem.
6. Different factions engage in work avoidance behaviors instead of addressing the issue.

ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES VERSUS TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Adaptive challenges:
 - Requires new learning.
 - Stakeholders need to do the work.
- Technical issues:
 - Clear definition of the problem.
 - Solutions exist.
 - Work can be done by authority figure.

Slide 1-14

F. What distinguishes an adaptive challenge from a technical issue?

1. Adaptive challenges are characterized by:
 - a. Problems that require learning to address them.
 - b. Approaches to solving the challenge that require learning.

- c. Stakeholders needing to do the work to solve the problem.
- 2. Technical issues are characterized by:
 - a. Clear definition of the problem.
 - b. Clear approach to solve the problem.
 - c. Work that can be accomplished by authority figure.

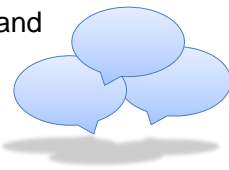
**ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES VERSUS
TECHNICAL ISSUES (cont'd)**

- Many problems combine characteristics of both:
 - Definition of the problem is clear.
 - The solution requires learning.
 - Both stakeholders and individuals in authority positions must do the work to solve the problem.

Slide 1-15

- 3. Many problems combine characteristics of both:
 - a. Definition of the problem is clear.
 - b. The solution requires learning.
 - c. Both stakeholders and individuals in authority positions must do the work to solve the problem.

Of these challenges, which are technical problems and which are adaptive challenges? Are any of these possibly both? Which ones?



Slide 1-16

CONTROLLING THE TEMPERATURE

- “Changing the status quo generates tension and produces heat.”
- To stimulate deep change within an organization, you have to control the temperature by raising or lowering it.

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002

Slide 1-17

4. “Changing the status quo generates tension and produces heat by surfacing hidden conflicts and challenging organizational culture” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 107). To stimulate deep change within an organization, you have to control the temperature by either:

CONTROLLING THE TEMPERATURE (cont'd)

- Raising the temperature:
 - Draw attention to the tough questions.
 - Give people more responsibility than they are comfortable with.
 - Bring conflicts to the surface.

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002

Slide 1-18

- a. Raising the temperature (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 111):

- Draw attention to the tough questions.
- Give people more responsibility than they are comfortable with.
- Bring conflicts to the surface.

CONTROLLING THE TEMPERATURE (cont'd)

- Lowering the temperature:
 - Address the technical aspects of the problem.
 - Establish a structure for the problem-solving process.
 - Temporarily reclaim responsibility for issues.
 - Employ work-avoidance mechanisms.
 - Slow down the process of challenging norms and expectations.

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002

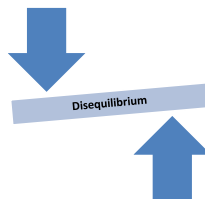
Slide 1-19

b. Lowering the temperature (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 111):

- Address the technical aspects of the problem.
- Establish a structure for the problem-solving process by breaking the problem into parts and creating time frames, decision rules, and clear role assignments.
- Temporarily reclaim responsibility for the tough issues.
- Employ work-avoidance mechanisms.
- Slow down the process of challenging norms and expectations.

PRODUCTIVE ZONE OF DISEQUILIBRIUM

- Disequilibrium can be productive, but it has to be within people's tolerance levels.
- Enough to motivate but not overwhelm.



Slide 1-20

5. Disequilibrium can be productive, but in order for it to be, it has to be within the tolerance levels of the people involved. In exercising leadership to deal with adaptive challenges, it may be necessary to raise the temperature around the issue to the point where it is uncomfortable enough for people to want to deal with it, but not so intolerable that the result is disabling.
6. The productive zone of disequilibrium, according to Heifetz et al., is “the optimal range of distress within which the urgency in the system motivates people to engage in adaptive work. If the level is too low, people will be inclined to complacently maintain their current way of working, but if it is too high, people are likely to be overwhelmed and may start to panic or engage in severe forms of work avoidance” (2009, p. 306).

**PRODUCTIVE ZONE
OF DISEQUILIBRIUM (cont'd)**

- If overwhelmed, people may engage in work avoidance:
 - Diverting attention.
 - Displacing responsibility.


— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 1-21

7. Work avoidance can take many forms, including diverting attention and displacing responsibility.
 - a. Diverting attention (Heifetz et al., 2009, pp. 85-86):
 - Focusing on the technical parts of the challenge and avoiding the adaptive part.
 - Addressing only what can be addressed using one’s current expertise.
 - Using breaks, jokes and so on to reduce the discomfort.
 - Denial.
 - Fighting about another issue.
 - Refusing to address certain issues even when they represent part of the problem.

b. Displacing responsibility (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 85-86):

- Finding people to scapegoat.
- Marginalizing the person or persons who raise the issue.
- Creating an external enemy.
- Attacking authority.
- Placing the responsibility for solving the problem on people who can't do anything about it — e.g., consultants, task forces, committees.

Did any of these signs of work avoidance exist in the challenges listed in Activity 1.1? If so, which ones?



Slide 1-22

[illegible]

PRODUCTIVE ZONE OF DISEQUILIBRIUM (cont'd)

- Periods of disequilibrium require effective leadership.
- Leaders need to create an optimal balance of distress and motivation:
 - Too low = complacency and no change.
 - Too high = frustration or feeling overwhelmed.

Slide 1-23

[illegible]

8. Periods of disequilibrium do not have to be unproductive, but they do require the effective exercise of leadership. Individuals exercising leadership need to focus on creating an optimal balance of distress in the individuals with a sense of urgency and motivation to take on the necessary work and changes.

- a. Too low a level of distress or motivation, and complacency may exist, and no change will occur.
- b. Too high a level of distress, and frustration or feelings of being overwhelmed may develop, leading to the work-avoidance techniques noted previously.

III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP

ROOTS OF AUTHORITY

- According to Heifetz et al., the roots of authority are:
 - Power.
 - Influence.
 - Expertise.
 - Position.

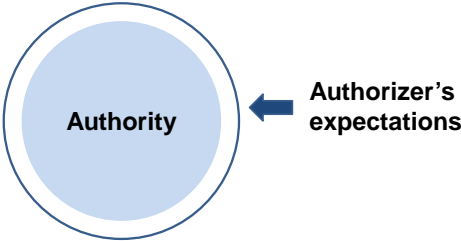
Slide 1-24

A. Roots of authority.

1. According to Heifetz et al., the roots of authority are power, influence, expertise and position (2009).

BOUNDARIES OF AUTHORITY

The boundaries of one's authority arise from the authorizer's expectations.




Slide 1-25

2. The boundaries of one's authority arise from the authorizer's expectations. These expectations represent the scope of one's authority.

- a. Party A gives Party B power in exchange for services (e.g., the expectation that Party B will provide solutions to problems).
- b. In exchange, Party B expects attention, resources and support to accomplish the job.

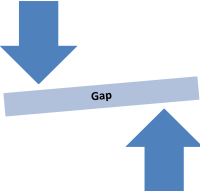
What about leadership — is it something you are or something you do?



Slide 1-26

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP

- Leadership: an activity, not a position.
- When an individual's or an organization's current reality is not the same as their aspired-to state, a gap exists.



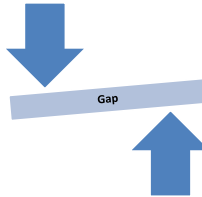
— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 1-27

B. Exercising leadership.

1. By contrast, Heifetz et al., view leadership as an activity rather than a position (2009).

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP (cont'd)

- Authority reinforces what already exists, while gaps require exercising adaptive leadership.
- Without the gap, there is no reason to exercise leadership.



Slide 1-28

2. When an individual's or an organization's current reality is not the same as their aspired-to state, a gap exists. Without the existence of the gap, Heifetz et al. (2009) suggest that there is no reason to exercise leadership, only the need to continue to exercise the functions associated with authority. That is, authority reinforces what already exists, while gaps require exercising adaptive leadership.

- What are examples of gaps in your organization that require exercising leadership instead of functioning in an authority role?



- Is authority a role or an inherent trait?

Slide 1-29

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP (cont'd)

- Exercising leadership involves challenging authorizers' expectations.

Slide 1-30

3. Exercising leadership involves challenging authorizers' expectations.

What do you think it means to challenge an authorizer's expectations, and under what circumstances would you be willing to do so?



Slide 1-31


EXERCISING LEADERSHIP (cont'd)

- Exercising leadership involves helping your organization or community deal with adaptive challenges that are generated because there is a gap between people's current reality and their aspirations.

Slide 1-32

4. Specifically, exercising leadership involves helping your organization or community deal with adaptive challenges that are generated because there is a gap between people's current reality and their aspirations.

Is it possible to exercise leadership without authority?



Slide 1-33

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP (cont'd)

- Leadership and authority differ.
- Opportunities to exercise leadership exist during periods when there are challenges, but no available tools with which to produce solutions.
- The strategies involved in exercising leadership will vary depending on authority.

Slide 1-34

5. Leadership and authority differ. During periods of challenges for which there are no available tools to produce solutions, opportunities to exercise leadership exist.
6. The strategies involved in exercising leadership will vary, depending on whether or not you are in a position of authority.

How would leadership strategies differ for someone in an authority role versus someone not in an authority role?



Slide 1-35

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP (cont'd)

- With authority:
 - Enlist resources.
 - Deal with constraints.
- Without authority:
 - Raise questions and concerns.
 - Challenge expectations.
 - Connect with people outside the organization.

Slide 1-36

7. Exercising leadership from a position of authority enables one to enlist the resources that come with the position more readily and also to deal with the constraints that come with the position.
8. Exercising leadership without authority involves taking action that goes beyond what is typically expected, both formally and informally. Some actions that someone exercising leadership without authority might take include:
 - a. Raising questions and concerns from the middle that are unexpected.
 - b. Challenging people's expectations.
 - c. Connecting with people from outside the organization.

Of the challenges listed in Activity 1.1, what is the situational status between authority and leadership?



Slide 1-37

SHOULD YOU DO IT ALONE?

Involving others in addressing issues:

- Makes one less vulnerable to attack.
- Reduces individual exposure.
- Avoids isolation.

Slide 1-38

C. Should you do it alone?

1. When you involve others in the process of addressing issues, it makes you less vulnerable to a variety of things, including:
 - a. Attacks by the people who oppose your efforts.
 - b. A tendency to believe the people who tell you what a good job you are doing, coupled with their willingness to let you take on the work yourself while watching from the sidelines.
 - c. Focusing so single-mindedly on the issue that you are unable to recognize signals to do things differently.
2. Ultimately, involving partners makes sense. It reduces your exposure to dangers and attacks.

IV. WHAT IS ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP?

WHAT IS ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP?

- The practice of mobilizing people to tackle issues and problems which have no known solutions, and thriving.
- Handling change in a way that allows an organization to flourish rather than shrink or cease to exist.
- Holding/Supporting people through a sustained period of disequilibrium.

Slide 1-39

- A. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to successfully handle concerns and conflicts which have no known solutions.
- B. The concepts of adaptive leadership come out of evolutionary biology. However, the key for attempting to exercise adaptive leadership is understanding that it really involves handling change in a way that allows an organization to flourish, rather than shrink or cease to exist.
- C. Adaptive leadership is the activity of mobilizing adaptive work. It is holding/supporting people through a sustained period of disequilibrium — a learning process through which people achieve a successful adaptation to the change.

HALLMARKS OF ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Building on existing benefits and eliminating what is not helpful.
- Experimenting to see what works.
- Seeing value in diverse ideas.
- Being able to tolerate loss and knowing how to work against defensive patterns.
- Recognizing that adaptations take time and persistence.

Slide 1-40

- D. Some hallmarks of adaptive leadership include:
1. Building on what currently exists that is beneficial and eliminating what is not.
 2. Experimenting to see what works.
 3. Seeing value in diverse ideas that come from throughout the organization, not just from the top.
 4. Being able to tolerate loss in order to generate new approaches and knowing how to work against defensive patterns that result from impending loss.
 5. Recognizing that adaptations take time and persistence.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Adaptive Challenge Scenarios

Purpose

Identify adaptive challenges and the difficult conversations they generate, illustrate areas of disequilibrium, and highlight the consequences of inaction.

Directions

1. You will be divided into small groups of five to seven and will review the given scenario.
2. Answer the related questions in your group, and be prepared to share your answers with the rest of the class.
3. You will have 10 minutes for the discussion.
4. Your instructor will reconvene the class and ask your group to talk about your discussion and answers to the questions.

Scenario

You are an executive level chief officer in a medium-sized organization. In this position, you are an “at will” employee. Your continued employment is contingent upon your good working relationship with the town manager.

The town and your organization are facing very difficult fiscal times. Many decisions are needed but are not forthcoming from the town manager. In recent meetings, the town manager has been defensive, agitated and quickly shuts down efforts to discuss needed directions and actions. Other executive level managers frequently have “parking lot” conversations after meetings and express frustration and anger over the lack of direction.

Thinking that the fire department seems to always have a good relationship with the town manager, the other directors ask you to go “talk some sense” into the town manager. You know that this needs to occur, but you are the least senior executive, and your employment contract is up for renewal next month.



1. Diagnose what you think may be happening.

2. How would you describe the disequilibrium you may have from being asked to have this conversation?

3. Would this be a difficult conversation for you? Why or why not?

4. How would you plan for having this difficult conversation?

V. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- What is an adaptive challenge?
- Relationship between authority and leadership.
- What is adaptive leadership?

Slide 1-42

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UNIT 2: AUTHORITY AND POWER

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:

- 2.1 *Map out the sources of one's formal and informal authority.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- 2.1 *Identify the functions of authority.*
- 2.2 *Recognize the environment that provides an authority figure with the permission to exercise his or her role and responsibilities.*
- 2.3 *Identify the factors that compromise one's authority.*
-

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UNIT 2: AUTHORITY AND POWER

Slide 2-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the functions of authority.
- Recognize the environment that provides an authority figure with the permission to exercise his or her role and responsibilities.
- Identify the factors that compromise one's authority.


Slide 2-2

- What does it mean to be in a position of authority in your organization?
- What are the expectations of others around you regarding your role?
- Where does your authority come from?



Slide 2-3

- How do you manage your authority role?
- How does your authority influence you during difficult conversations?
What if you did not initiate the conversation?
- What do you think are the functions of authority?



Slide 2-4

I. WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF AUTHORITY?

WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF AUTHORITY?

- Provide direction.
- Maintain order.
- Provide protection.

Slide 2-5

PROVIDE DIRECTION

The person in an authority role:

- Defines where the group is headed.
- Defines the expected outcomes of the group.
- Provides solutions to problems.


— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 2-6

A. Provide direction (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 28).

The person in an authority role:

1. Defines where the group is headed — that is, direction.
2. Defines the expected outcomes of the group.
3. Provides solutions to problems.

What are some examples of authority roles providing direction?



Slide 2-7

MAINTAIN ORDER

The authority figure maintains order by:

- Orienting people to their current roles.
- Establishing relationships to accomplish tasks.
- Restoring order when conflicts arise.
- Maintaining existing norms.

— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 2-8


- B. Maintain order (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 28).

The authority figure maintains order by:

1. Orienting people to their current roles.
2. Establishing relationships to accomplish tasks.
3. Restoring order when conflicts arise.

4. Maintaining existing norms.

What are some examples of authority roles maintaining order?



Slide 2-9

PROVIDE PROTECTION

In order to ensure accomplishment of tasks, authority figures:

- Ensure that the group/organization/society is not vulnerable.
- Ensure a safe, predictable environment in which anxiety is minimized and rules are consistently upheld.
- Try to ensure survival from external threats.

— Heifetz et al., 2009


Slide 2-10

C. Provide protection (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 28).

In order to ensure accomplishment of tasks, authority figures:

1. Ensure that the group/organization/society is not vulnerable.
2. Ensure a safe, predictable environment in which anxiety is minimized and rules are consistently upheld.
3. Ensure survival from external threats.

What are some examples of authority roles providing protection?



Slide 2-11

II. POWER AND THE AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT

POWER AND THE AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT

Definition of the authorizing environment:
“The powers and influence that come from formal and informal authority relationships have the same basic structure. The social contract is identical: Party A entrusts Party B with power in exchange for services.”

— Heifetz et al., 2009

Slide 2-12

- A. Definition of the authorizing environment: “The powers and influence that come from formal and informal authority relationships have the same basic structure. The social contract is identical: Party A entrusts Party B with power in exchange for services” (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 24).

In what ways might the authorizing environment influence your methods of conduct during a difficult conversation?



Slide 2-13

WHAT IS YOUR AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT?

- Formal authority/authorizers.
- Informal authority/authorizers.
- Scope of authority.

— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 2-14

B. What is your authorizing environment (Heifetz et al., 2009)?

FORMAL AUTHORITY

- Comes from those who are above you in the hierarchy.
 - What you are authorized to do.
 - What you are expected to do.
 - How you are expected to do it.

Slide 2-15

1. Formal authority/authorizers.

- a. Comes from those who are above you in the hierarchy.
- b. Defines what you are authorized to do.
- c. Defines what you are expected to do and how you are expected to do it.

FORMAL AUTHORITY (cont'd)

- Defined by:
 - Job descriptions.
 - Rules and regulations.
 - Organizational bylaws.
 - Organization charts.
 - Constitution.
 - Law and precedent.

Slide 2-16

- d. In addition, formal authority is defined by:
 - Job descriptions.
 - Rules and regulations.
 - Organizational bylaws.
 - Organization charts.
 - Constitution (in elective politics).
 - Law and precedent (in elective politics).

INFORMAL AUTHORITY

Comes from above and below (lateral or external).

- A direct report may have no formal authority, but can have significant influence over the environment.
- How will you meet their needs?
- What support is needed to accomplish your job?

Slide 2-17

2. Informal authority/authorizers.

- a. Comes from above and below. It can reside in lateral positions, or be external to the organization. The one element they share is that they have no formal authority over you.
- b. A direct report may have no formal authority, but can have a significant influence over the daily environment and culture.
- c. Have expectations that you will meet their needs.
- d. Give the support you need to accomplish your job.

What are some examples of the kinds of support from your informal authorizers that you would need to accomplish your job?



Slide 2-18

FORMAL/INFORMAL AUTHORITY

- Interdependent.
- Each affects the other.

Slide 2-19

3. Formal and informal authority are interdependent, with each affecting the other.

SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

- Comes from the expectations of your authorizers.
 - Both formal and informal authorizers have expectations. Conflicts may arise.
 - There are limits to their expectations.
- A wider scope of informal authority increases overlaps representing shared experiences.

Slide 2-20

4. Scope of authority.
- a. The boundaries of your scope of authority come from the expectations of your authorizers.
 - Both formal and informal authorizers have expectations.
 - There are limits to their expectations.
 - b. Conflicts inevitably exist between the expectations of formal and informal authorizers.
 - c. Developing a wider scope of informal authority increases overlapping shared experiences.

Why does having a wider scope of informal authority benefit an authority figure, especially when he or she is attempting to resolve conflicts between authorizers' expectations?



Slide 2-21

To lead, you simply must have power, and be skilled in its use. Do you agree?

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.



Slide 2-22

C. Power and authorizing environment (Heifetz et al., 2009).

POWER AND AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT

- Power is the ability to get things done.
- Power plays a role in getting others to go along.
- Power and authority (the right to command) are often confused.
- Many do not have the capacity to move (influence) others, despite their authority.

Slide 2-23

1. Definitions of power typically involve the ability to get things done.

2. Power plays an important role in getting others to go along.
 - a. A term that sometimes gets confused with power is authority, but they are very different.
 - b. Authority is the right to command. It is possible to have been given the right to command by virtue of title or position but still not have the capacity to move people in the direction of your vision.
 - c. To lead and manage successfully, you simply must have power and be skilled in its use.


WHAT IS POWER, AND
HOW DO YOU GET IT?

- Power is the capacity to get your way.
- Power raises ethical issues.
- Power is the key when influence and persuasion don't work.
- There is a relationship between power and dependence.

— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 2-24

- D. What is power, and how do you get it? (Heifetz et al., 2009)
1. It is the capacity to get your way, which raises the issue of ethics.
 - a. What is the purpose for which power is used?
 - b. What will be the effect on people, places, and future possibilities (for example, Global War on Terror and profiling for security)?
 2. Influence does not always get people to want what we want.
 3. Exercising leadership requires getting our way in matters of importance. Power provides the key for when persuasion and negotiation don't work.
 4. There is a relationship between power and dependence.

From where does your power come?



Slide 2-25

THE CONCEPT OF THE AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT

- Heifetz et al. describe the authorizing environment in terms of one's scope of authority:
 - The formal and informal authorizers who explicitly or implicitly define what you are authorized to do, their expectations for what you will do, and how you will do it.

Slide 2-26

E. The concept of the authorizing environment.

1. Heifetz et al. (2009) describe the authorizing environment in terms of one's scope of authority. That is, the formal and informal authorizers who explicitly or implicitly define what you are authorized to do, their expectations for what you will do, and how you will do it (pp. 216–217).
2. Moore and Khagram (2004) describe a strategic model aimed at discussing how to produce “public value” that includes three complex components: public value, sources of legitimacy and support, and operational capabilities. In this context, those sources of legitimacy and support are the authorizing environment, which is made up of:

THE CONCEPT OF THE AUTHORIZING ENVIRONMENT (cont'd)

“The large number and wide variety of people in particular positions who authorize them to take action.”

— Moore & Khagram, 2004
Slide 2-27

“The large number and wide variety of people in particular positions who authorize them to take action, or appropriate money for them to use. The authorizing environment also includes those who can influence the particular individuals who make these decisions and have reasons to do so. Together, these individuals can call managers to account for their performance, and choose to continue or withdraw the authorizations and money the managers need to operate” (p. 6).

- In your organization, who is part of your authorizing environment?
- How might who your authorizers are impact your planning or conducting of a difficult conversation?



Slide 2-28

TWO CATEGORIES OF POWER

- Formal power:
 - Given based on a legitimate title.
 - Confers the capacity to reward or punish.
 - Granted and enforced by the organization.

Slide 2-29

F. Two categories of power.

1. Formal power — Power that is given to someone based on a legitimate title (e.g., boss, father, mother, and teacher) that also confers the capacity to reward or punish. Formal power is granted and enforced by the organization.


TWO CATEGORIES OF POWER (cont'd)

- Informal power:
 - Emanates from our perception of an individual's expertise, special information, connections or charisma.
 - Created by the individual's actions, but granted by others.

Slide 2-30

2. Informal power — This emanates from our perception of an individual's expertise, special information, connections or charisma. This power is created by the individual's actions, but granted by others when they see their personal benefit from allowing the actions.

- Is one form of power better than another when involved in a difficult conversation? Why?
- What examples can you cite to support your thoughts?



Slide 2-31

BASES OF POWER

- Legitimate.
- Reward.
- Coercive.
- Expert.
- Referent.

Formal

Informal

— Vecchino, 2007


Slide 2-32

G. Bases of power.

1. Doctors John French and Bertram Raven are credited with identifying five distinct sources of power (Vecchio, 2007, p. 71):
 - a. Legitimate power: Derived from social or societal empowerment and acceptance and/or delegation of authority. Legitimate power must be accepted by society in order to be effective and/or tolerated.
 - b. Reward power: The actual ability to determine and distribute intrinsic and/or extrinsic rewards or validation equates to reward power. Reward power relates to a perceived favorable or positive outcome for compliance.
 - c. Coercive power: Coercive power evokes fear and causes compliance in order to avoid perceived negative or painful result(s). Vecchio suggests that if reward power can be termed as “the carrot,” then coercive power is “the stick.”


- d. Expert power: Individuals, such as subject matter experts, are able to direct others because of their perceived knowledge, skills and abilities.
 - e. Referent power: Derived from people's need or desire to be identified with another person, group or cause. The person, group or cause wielding the allure can influence behaviors by accepting or rejecting those seeking to belong or be part of their clique.
2. Vecchio (2007) explains that expert and referent power bases are more informal in nature, while legitimate, reward and coercive power bases are built from more formal foundations.

- What is your strongest power base?
- What is the relationship between authority and power?
- What effect does power have on any conversations?



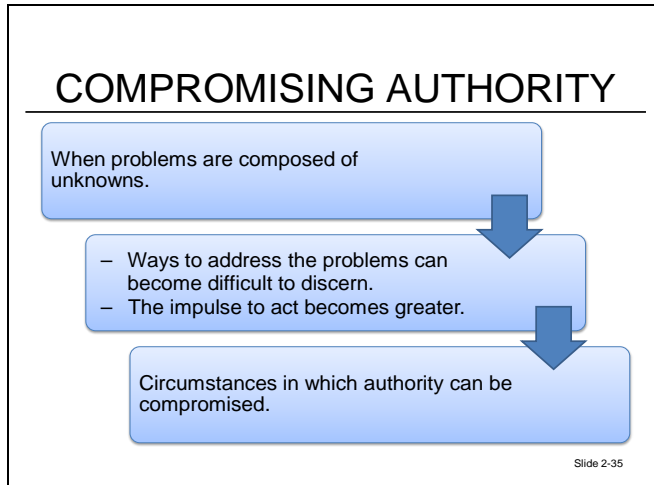
Slide 2-33

- To conduct a difficult conversation, do you need a specific power base?
- Why or why not?

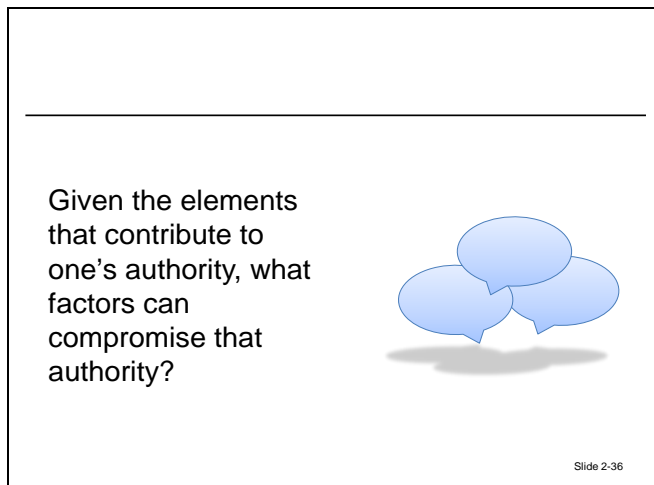


Slide 2-34

III. WHAT COMPROMISES YOUR AUTHORITY AND/OR POWER?



- A. Holding an authority role enables one to approach certain types of problems with an array of known tools. However, when the problems are composed of unknowns, the ways to address them can become extremely difficult to discern while the impulse to act becomes greater. These represent circumstances in which one's authority can be compromised (Heifetz et al., 2009).



COMPROMISING AUTHORITY (cont'd)

- Factors that can compromise authority include:
 - Incompetence.
 - Lack of trust.
 - Marginalization.
 - Unwillingness to solve problems.
 - Lack of purpose.
 - Failure of integrity.

Slide 2-37

B. Factors that can compromise authority include:

1. Incompetence, or put another way, not knowing what to do to fix a given situation because the situation is different, unfamiliar, and/or not likely to respond to solutions that come from the core functions of the authority role.
2. Lack of trust or issues of trust can result in the inability to move forward on an issue despite the need to do so.
3. Marginalization can result from not knowing when focusing on the issue is important and when bringing it up is unnecessary to the matter at hand. Repeated references to the issue in all circumstances may result in people tuning out the messenger.
4. Unwillingness to solve both technical and/or adaptive problems. Technical problems tend to have known solutions, while adaptive problems require much more work to diagnose and to figure out how to address. Often there are no known solutions.
5. Lack of purpose. Heifetz et al. (2009) state that “Taking on adaptive challenge is difficult and dangerous work. The only reason we can imagine you would want to do this kind of work is to serve purposes that matter to you deeply” (p. 221).
6. Failure of integrity. Behavior that lacks integrity can be either unethical or immoral. It violates the trust of others.

- In what ways do the factors that can compromise authority affect your abilities or effectiveness in difficult conversations?
- Is any one factor more or less damaging than another?
- Which ones and why?



Slide 2-38

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ACTIVITY 2.1

Identifying Elements of the Authorizing Environment

Purpose

Analyze the authorizing environment of a given situation.

Directions

1. Read the scenario.
2. Participate in a large-group discussion to complete the worksheet.

Background

Jake is a star performer in his senior management position. He is well liked, respected, and technically proficient. Jake has promoted up the ranks of his organization fairly quickly. He has been a senior manager for the past three years. He reports to Mark, the executive director, who in turn reports to an elected governing body.

Situation

Since being promoted to senior manager, Jake has become increasingly aware of Mark's unethical and morally questionable behavior. Mark's unacceptable behavior takes place both on and off the job. Jake is not alone in terms of noticing Mark's behavior; other senior and mid-level managers are also aware of Mark's conduct. In fact, there are many members throughout the organization and the community that have become aware of Mark's behavior.

Mark's behaviors that are causing unrest and discontent include the following:

Mark frequently is not where he is supposed to be, but turns in payroll requests that suggest he was on duty and at work. Due to his position, his attendance is typically not called into question.

Mark has repeatedly manipulated and misrepresented facts and figures to appease his superiors.

Mark is participating in an extramarital affair. Both he and the other party are married (to others). Mark has become increasingly flagrant in his pursuit of this relationship. He no longer tries to hide the relationship, and he has begun to divert business to his partner, without going through the proper bid process.

Problem

Mark's behavior is hurting the image of the organization and may have reached the level of criminal conduct. His conduct is hurting morale and causing cascading issues, as members debate what the morality standard is or should be — the organization is fractionalizing and tension is high.

Mark has enjoyed a very favorable relationship with the elected officials of the governing body. Although they are largely opposed in their political views and affiliation, the governing body tolerates Mark because they feel he is well-educated and effective in his role. Additionally, Mark's political views and affiliation are shared with between 35 and 45 percent of the extended community; having Mark in his position creates good will and a buffer for the governing body. The governing body is conflict-adverse and extremely reluctant to encourage discontent. Mark exploits this situation and uses it to reinforce and validate his behavior.

Jake has had a number of conversations with Mark about his behaviors. The nature and tone of these conversations has been professional, but largely unproductive. Mark has been persistent in maintaining that he is empowered to conduct his activities as he sees fit, and that any attempt to confront him would be seen as grounds for termination. He has also been quick to point out that the governing body is risk-averse and highly unlikely to challenge him or his behavior.

Actions

Jake is concerned about possible retaliation resulting from a confrontation with Mark. Mark's temper and vindictive nature are well known throughout the organization. Jake realizes that going to Mark's supervisors may not be without consequence.

Jake is a member of a civic organization. He regularly attends the club's Tuesday lunch meetings, as does the local sheriff and a number of other powerful persons. Jake is friends with the sheriff and makes a point to sit with him and briefly visit before the meeting. After the meeting, Jake and the sheriff walk to their vehicles together. Jake asks the sheriff what he should do about the situation he is facing. The sheriff is personal friends with the chair of the governing board. He indicates he will make the chair aware of the magnitude of the situation and the need to take action to minimize additional damage to the organization. The sheriff also indicates that the possible criminal activity must be investigated and should be directed to the agency having jurisdiction. Jake agrees to take his concerns to the local police agency.

The sheriff follows up with the chair and makes her aware of the magnitude of the discord. He also lets her know of the possible criminal activity and the necessity of an investigation. Jake makes an appointment with the police chief and his senior detective. Jake presents his concerns about Mark's possible criminal activity. He also presents the documentation to support his position.

Outcome

The chair calls for an executive session to discuss the allegations. In that session, it becomes obvious that the situation is and has been known by various board members for a period of time and to varying degrees. All are in agreement that something must be done to address the matter. Their legal advisor suggests that it may be in their best interest to let the criminal investigation play out before taking further action.

The criminal investigation is conducted and the findings are presented to the district prosecutor, who files criminal charges against Mark. Jake will be required to testify if the case goes to trial. The governing body suspends Mark until the outcome of the trial is obtained.

Ultimately, Mark pleads out to the charges and avoids a public trial. His plea allows him to avoid incarceration and incorporates a stiff fine and restitution. The governing body is able to sever Mark's employment, while saving face with the community. Jake continues in his role within the organization. He doesn't apply for the executive director position. The governing body embarks on an executive search for Mark's replacement.

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ACTIVITY 2.1 (cont'd)

Worksheet

Authorizer	How is Their Authority Defined?	Category of Power	Base(s) of Power	Signs of Resistance

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IV. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- What are the functions of authority?
- Power and the authorizing environment.
- What compromises your authority and/or power?

Slide 2-40

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UNIT 3: CREATING A PLAN FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION: IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:

- 3.1 *Develop the first part of a plan for conducting a difficult conversation that identifies the purpose, desired outcome, and points of analysis required to proceed.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- 3.1 *Define difficult conversations.*
 - 3.2 *Identify the concept of the “elephant in the room.”*
-

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UNIT 3: CREATING A PLAN FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION: IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE

Slide 3-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

- Define difficult conversations.
- Identify the concept of the “elephant in the room.”

Slide 3-2

DVD PRESENTATION


“THE KING’S SPEECH”



Slide 3-3

I. WHAT IS A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

- Think about a time when you needed to have a conversation with someone but dreaded doing so.
- What were your feelings?
- Why did you not want to have this conversation?



Slide 3-4

WHAT IS A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION?

- Any topic that is awkward, uncomfortable or embarrassing, but needs to be discussed.
- Any conversation that is purposely avoided, leaving feelings unexpressed.
- Difficult conversations are:
 - Not limited to any one topic.
 - Often difficult for each person.
 - Part of everyone's life.


— Stone et al., 2010

Slide 3-5

Defining a difficult conversation (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 2010):

- A. Any topic that needs to be discussed and is awkward, uncomfortable or perhaps embarrassing to discuss.
- B. Any conversation that is purposely avoided, leaving feelings unexpressed.
- C. Not limited to any one topic, and often difficult for each person.
- D. Part of everyone's life, and often faced daily to some degree or another.

- Think back again to that difficult conversation you dreaded having.
- Would anyone like to share the topic of the conversation?



Slide 3-6

II. RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION


RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

- A pending difficult conversation may manifest signs and symptoms of stress.
- Difficult conversations often occur when exercising leadership around an adaptive challenge.
- The need is often recognized by many, but acted on by few, if any.

Slide 3-7

- A. As noted earlier, difficult conversations may be awkward, frustrating, embarrassing, create conflict or fear, and so on.
- B. A pending difficult conversation may manifest as signs and symptoms of stress, such as sleeplessness, loss of appetite, agitation, and inability to focus, as well as blood pressure problems or gastrointestinal issues.
- C. Difficult conversations often occur when exercising leadership around an adaptive challenge.
- D. The need is often recognized by many, but acted on by few, if any.

What other signs can indicate that a difficult conversation is needed?



Slide 3-8

III. AVOIDING THE “ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM”

AVOIDING THE “ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM”

- A topic or perspective that everyone knows needs to be discussed, but that no one is willing to bring up.
- The known “undiscussable.”
- Not mentioned because of fear of harm to self or others.

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 3-9

A. The “elephant in the room” (Stone et al., 2010).

1. The “elephant in the room” — a topic or perspective that everyone knows needs to be discussed, but no one is willing to bring up.
2. The “elephant” is often not mentioned because of fear of harm to self or others. Bringing the topic out front may result in being isolated or ostracized. The person broaching the subject may be construed as “not a team player.”
3. The elephant is the known “undiscussable.” It often manifests itself in the conversations that occur after a formal meeting or gathering (parking lot truths).

- a. Parking lot truths are the conversations that occur outside the formal gathering, in which individuals typically will speak their minds.
- b. Various reasons, such as fear of reprisal or not wanting to hurt someone's feelings, often restrict an individual from feeling that it is safe to say what they want to say or what really needs to be said.

AVOIDING THE "ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM" (cont'd)

- The presence of an "undiscussable" is known privately when one realizes that there are two conversations occurring at the same time:
 - Public dialogue — What is openly discussed.
 - Private dialogue — The dialogue in your own head; what you would really like to say but do not.

Slide 3-10

4. The presence of an "undiscussable" is known privately when one realizes that there are two conversations occurring at the same time.
 - a. One is the public dialogue — that which is being discussed openly.
 - b. The second — a private dialogue that everyone is having in his or her own head. This is the one where you think what you would really like to say but do not say out loud.
 - c. The interior "in my head" conversations are often your balcony observations, reflections and interpretations, which may be specifically about what is not being said about the public topic.

GET A VIEW FROM ABOVE


- Creates perspective wherein we can separate the role we play from who we are.
- Take a distanced view amid the current swirl of activity to observe and gain perspective on yourself and the larger system.
- This enables you to see patterns that are not visible from the ground.

— Stone et al., 2010

Slide 3-11

- B. Get a view from above (Stone et al., 2010).
1. Getting a view from above affords us a perspective wherein we can separate the role we play from who we are.
 2. To examine a system or yourself while in the middle of action requires the ability to achieve some distance from the events taking place. This means taking a distanced view amid the current swirl of activity to observe and gain perspective on yourself and the larger system.
 3. This process enables you to see patterns that are not visible from the ground.

What are some of your reasons for keeping a subject “undiscussable”?



Slide 3-12


DVD PRESENTATION

“THE KING’S SPEECH”




Slide 3-13

What did you observe that makes this evidence of “elephant in the room”?



Slide 3-14

- Think back to the list of challenges you identified in Activity 1.2 and select one of the challenges.
- What was the “elephant in the room” for that situation?
- Would anyone like to share their “elephant in the room”?



Slide 3-15

IV. TYPES OF CONVERSATION

TYPES OF CONVERSATIONS

- The “what happened” conversation.
- The “feelings” conversation.
- The “identity” conversation.

— Stone et al., 2010

Slide 3-16

Three types of conversations exist within a difficult conversation (Stone et al., 2010, pp. 9-15):

**THE “WHAT HAPPENED”
CONVERSATION**

Based on disagreement about what has happened or what should have happened.

- Assumption of truth: I am right; you are wrong.
- Not about what someone says but about what it means.
- Not about what is true but what is important.
- Perception of intentions often the basis for argument.
- The blame game is always at play.

Slide 3-17

A. The “what happened” conversation.

This type is based on disagreement about what has actually happened or what should have happened.

1. Assumption of truth: I am right; you are wrong.
2. Disagreement not about what someone says, but about what it means.
3. Not about what is true, but rather what is important.
4. Perception of intentions often the basis for argument in the “what happened” conversation.
5. In “what happened” situations, the “blame game” always is at play.
6. Blaming — a distraction from discovering why things happened; restricts movement forward.

- Going back to your difficult conversation from Activity 2.1, who experienced a “what happened” conversation?



- Who would like to share their experience with their “what happened” conversation?

Slide 3-18

THE “FEELINGS” CONVERSATION

- The internal conversation that centers on what you feel.
- You may question the validity or appropriateness of the conversation.
- You have concerns for the other people’s feelings.

Slide 3-19

B. The “feelings” conversation.

This internal conversation centers on what you feel. You may question the validity or appropriateness of the conversation. You have concerns for the other people’s feelings.

THE “FEELINGS” CONVERSATION (cont’d)

- Difficult conversations always involve emotions.
- Struggles exist to stay rational.
- Feelings are a significant part of conflict.
- If feelings are not engaged, then the underlying issues may never be addressed.
- Talking about feelings is a learned skill.
- Sometimes it is not appropriate to discuss feelings.

Slide 3-20

1. Difficult conversations always involve emotions.
2. Struggles exist to stay rational.
3. Feelings are a significant part of every conflict.
4. If feelings are not engaged and avoidance techniques are used, then the underlying issues may never be addressed.
5. Talking about feelings is a skill that can be learned.
6. Sometimes it is not appropriate to discuss feelings.

- When might it be appropriate to discuss feelings and when might it be best to let them go?



- How does this fit with the issues identified in Activity 2.1?

Slide 3-21

THE "IDENTITY" CONVERSATION

- An intrinsic conversation in which you determine what the situation means to you personally.
 - This conversation is often subtle but challenging.
 - It asks, "What I am saying to myself about me?"

Slide 3-22

C. The "identity" conversation.

This is an intrinsic conversation in which you have to determine what this situation means to you personally. Does this conversation mean you are compliant or noncompliant, bad or good, liked or disliked?

1. This conversation is often subtle but challenging.
2. It is truly an intrinsic dialogue: a look inward.
3. It asks, "What I am saying to myself about me?"

THE "IDENTITY" CONVERSATION (cont'd)

- A difficult conversation is always, in part, about you. Something is at stake for you beyond the basic topic.
- You may find yourself feeling out of balance (disequilibrium).

Slide 3-23

4. A difficult conversation is always, in part, about you. Something is at stake for you beyond the basic topic.
5. You may find yourself feeling out of balance (disequilibrium).

- Going back to your difficult conversation from Activity 2.1, who experienced an “identity” conversation?
- Who would like to share their experience with their “identity” conversation?
- What did it feel like? Did you feel out of balance? What did you do?



Slide 3-24

ACTIVITY 3.1

Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 1

Purpose

Complete the first part of a plan work to be used as the conducting a difficult conversation.

Directions

1. Work individually on this activity.
2. Consider a current issue that is either personal or professional in which you need to conduct a difficult conversation, and then do the following:
 - a. Identify the issue or problem to be discussed. (Be as specific as possible.)
 - b. Identify the facts surrounding the issue.
 - c. Identify who needs to be involved.
 - d. Identify the possible “undiscussables.”
 - e. Identify the personal risks.
 - f. Identify the risks to the others involved.
 - g. Identify the desired outcome.
 - h. Prepare an opening statement (first two sentences) for conducting the difficult conversation.
3. Record your responses on the provided worksheet.
4. You have approximately 40 minutes.

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ACTIVITY 3.1 (cont'd)

Worksheet

Complete this worksheet as fully as possible. Be as open and as trusting as you can be. Use reality-based scenarios.

1. What is the issue or problem to be discussed? (Be as specific as possible.)

2. What type of conversation is it?

3. What are the facts surrounding the issue?

4. Who needs to be involved?

5. What are the possible “undiscussables”?



6. What are the risks to me?

7. What are the risks to the others involved?

8. What is the desired outcome?

9. Prepare an opening statement (first two sentences) for conducting the difficult conversation.

V. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- What is a difficult conversation?
- Recognizing the need for a difficult conversation.
- Avoiding the “elephant in the room.”
- Types of conversations.

Slide 3-26

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UNIT 4: CREATING A PLAN FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION: ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:



- 4.1 *Complete the final part of a plan for conducting a difficult conversation by analyzing a current personal issue.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- 4.1 *Identify the purpose for having a difficult conversation.*
 - 4.2 *Identify what should be analyzed when planning for a difficult conversation.*
 - 4.3 *Identify the planning considerations for a difficult conversation.*
-

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UNIT 4:

CREATING A PLAN FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION: ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS

Slide 4-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the purpose for having a difficult conversation.
- Identify what should be analyzed when planning for a difficult conversation.
- Identify the planning considerations for a difficult conversation.

Slide 4-2

I. WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

- There are too many opportunities in life for difficult conversations, so you have to choose only the ones with great importance.
- To choose, you need to know your purpose.
- The conversation must have a perceived benefit.
- A general purpose is to close the gap.

Slide 4-3

- A. There needs to be a specific, known purpose for having a difficult conversation (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 2010).
1. There are too many opportunities for difficult conversations in life, so you have to choose only the ones with great importance to you or your organization.
 2. To choose, you need to know your purpose.
 3. Since difficult conversations entail some level of risk — minimal or profound — the conversation must have a perceived benefit.
 4. A general purpose for a difficult conversation is that it could close the gap between the current reality and the desired outcome — significantly or incrementally.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?
(cont'd)

- Listen and explore the perspectives, feelings and assumptions of others.
- Be willing to express your perspectives and feelings.
- Be open to having your assumptions challenged.
- Seek unification to find solutions.

Slide 4-4

5. Listen to and explore the perspectives, feelings and assumptions of others.
6. Be willing to express your perspectives and feelings.
7. Be open to having your assumptions challenged.
8. Seek unification to find solutions.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE? (cont'd)

- Focus on:
 - Curiosity rather than certainty.
 - Exploration versus debate.
 - “And” rather than “either/or.”

Slide 4-5

9. Key thoughts to focus on:
 - a. Curiosity rather than certainty.
 - b. Exploration versus debate.
 - c. “And” rather than “either/or.”

ASK “WHY?”

- Why this issue?
- Why this time?
- Why this person(s)?

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-6

- B. Ask the specific question of “why” (Stone et al., 2010).
 1. Why this issue?
 2. Why this time?
 3. Why this person(s)?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

- Solve an adaptive challenge.
- Create disequilibrium.
- Reveal an “elephant in the room.”
- Express your feelings.
- Open dialogue for the future.
- Repair a relationship.

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-7

C. What do you want to accomplish (Stone et al., 2010)?

1. Solve an adaptive challenge.
2. Create disequilibrium.
3. Reveal an “elephant in the room.”
4. Express your feelings.
5. Open dialogue for the future.
6. Repair a relationship.

IS THERE AN IDEAL OUTCOME?

- Have an ideal outcome in mind, but remain open to hearing others’ ideas.
- Challenge your own assumptions or desires versus needed outcomes.
- Think systematically.
- What do others really want? How do you know?
- What are others not saying (“elephants in the room”)?

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-8

D. Is there an ideal outcome? (Stone et al., 2010)

1. A difficult conversation initiated without at least an acceptable outcome in mind will be frustrating and fruitless.

2. Have an ideal outcome in mind, but remain open to hearing others' ideas.
3. Challenge your own assumptions or desires versus needed outcomes.
4. Think systematically.
5. What do others really want? How do you know?
6. What are they not saying — “elephants in the room”?

NOT ALL CONVERSATIONS NEED TO OCCUR

Sometimes it is best to leave things alone, but that is a choice you must make after careful consideration. Examples:

- When it is more about the conflict within yourself than with another.
- When actions are better than words.
- When the conversation is attempted without a purpose or is out of sync with the real issues.

— Stone et al., 2010

Slide 4-9

- E. Not all conversations need to occur (Stone et al., 2010).

Sometimes it is best to leave things alone, but that is a choice you must make after careful consideration. Some examples are:

1. When it is more about the conflict within yourself than with another.

Example: If you are struggling with a heavy workload and feel frustrated that your coworker is not doing his or her fair share, but when you consider the matter, it becomes more evident that you have a stronger desire to control the work than to allow another to assist.

2. Perhaps conversing is not the best option; “actions are better than words.”

Example: A coworker keeps asking, “When are you going to look at my project?” You keep indicating as soon as possible, but that day does not seem to come. The coworker keeps calling, and you’re getting irritated and thinking about telling him or her to stop bothering you. After considering the matter, you soon realize that your coworker is not trying to irritate you, but rather genuinely desires to show you the progress on his or her project. You then take steps to call, get the best time to go visit, and ensure it gets on the calendar. Your coworker expresses to you how much that means to him or her and does not call again before your scheduled visit.

3. A conversation attempted without a purpose or out of sync with the real issues.

Example: A peer has an addiction problem, and you know about it. It frustrates you, and you think that your peer can simply stop the addiction. You decide to initiate the conversation, but soon realize that it is a one-sided conversation. You had a purpose in mind but realized that to achieve the purpose without a mutual desire would be a senseless activity.

CONSIDERATIONS

- How will you set up the room?
- How will you set the tone?
- What are the facts? What are your assumptions? What feelings may be expressed?

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-10

F. Considerations. The following considerations should be noted (Stone et al., 2010):

1. How will you set up the room prior to the conversation?
2. How will you set the tone?
3. Planning — What are the facts? Test your assumptions — What are the feelings that may be expressed?

CONSIDERATIONS (cont'd)

- Are you willing to work with the other individual? What are the ideal outcomes? Are there alternatives?
- Are you trying to start a dialogue on the topic and gain acknowledgement that there is an issue?

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-11

4. You need to be willing to work with the other individual. What are the ideal outcomes? Are there alternatives?
5. Perhaps what you are trying to accomplish is to open up dialogue on the topic and acknowledge that there is an issue.

II. PLANNING THROUGH ANALYSIS

PLANNING THROUGH ANALYSIS

- Before initiating, analyze the situation.
- Determine the facts, rather than relying on assumptions.

Slide 4-12

A. Before you initiate.

1. Before you initiate a difficult conversation, a thorough analysis of the situation as known should be conducted, if time allows.
2. Determine the facts of the situation rather than relying on assumptions.

PLANNING THROUGH ANALYSIS (cont'd)

- Assessing your defaults.
 - Your norms or habits for how you assess and react to events.
 - Three general types of defaults:
 - Loyalties.
 - Personal tuning.
 - Bandwidth.

— Heifetz et al., 2009
Slide 4-13

B. Assessing your defaults (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, pp. 182-206.)

1. Defaults are your norms or habits for how you assess and react to events.
2. Three general types of defaults: loyalties, personal tuning, and bandwidth.

LOYALTIES

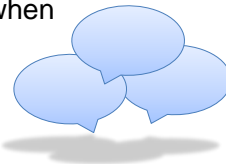
- Your feelings or obligations to others.
- They may interfere with your approach to difficult conversations.
- Circles of loyalties include:
 - Colleagues.
 - Community.
 - Family.

Slide 4-14

- a. **Loyalties** are your feelings or obligations to others. They may interfere with your approach to difficult conversations. Circles of loyalties include:

- Colleagues.
- Community.
- Family.

- In what ways are personal loyalties a source of strength when exercising leadership in a difficult conversation?



- How are they a weakness?

Slide 4-15

PERSONAL TUNING

- How tightly your “guitar strings” are tuned.
 - Are your strings so tight that you react disproportionately?
 - You will be “reactive” during difficult conversations if you are too tight or if you are not aware of your trigger points (the “they pushed my button” moments).

Slide 4-16

b. **Personal tuning** is how tightly your guitar strings are tuned. Your strings signify how you are tuned to react to certain situations. Are your strings so tight that you react disproportionately to events?

- Are you wound so tight that you cannot exercise leadership effectively during a difficult conversation?
- Being “too tight” may prevent you from navigating the challenges of adaptive change effectively.
- You will be “reactive” during difficult conversations if you are too tight or if you are not aware of your trigger points.
- Trigger points are the “they pushed my button” moments — often the moments at which a defensive approach comes out, making a difficult conversation even more difficult.

- Recall a recent situation in which your “button was pushed.”
- What caused that reaction?
- Did the situation relate to past events or interactions with the same person(s)?



Slide 4-17

PERSONAL TUNING (cont'd)

- Reflection is a key tool in the recognition and prevention of trigger points.
- Heifetz and Linsky (2002) cite two types of trigger points:
 - Hunger.
 - Carrying water.

Slide 4-18

- Reflection is a key tool in the recognition and prevention of trigger points. Reflect and learn from each interaction. Look deep for possible causes and understanding of trigger points.
- As noted by Heifetz and Linsky (2002, p. 201), there are generally two types of trigger points: hunger and carrying water.
 - Normal human needs often lead to a “hunger” to fulfill the need. If you are “feeling out of control, irrelevant, or unloved” you may be vulnerable to the influences of others who are trying to avoid adaptive change. The three areas of need are power and control, affirmation and importance, and intimacy and delight.
 - The idea of “carrying water” is taking on too much of another’s burdens or responsibilities. This is often a result of the attitude “it is easier to do it myself,” or an acceptance of other people’s responsibilities freely shed to you.
 - If you carry too much water then you will become overburdened, and in turn, the other person will not accept the adaptive change needed — give the work back.

- How might being too hungry make you vulnerable during a difficult conversation?
- Did you walk away feeling overwhelmed?
- How much additional work did you absorb?
- Why did this happen?



Slide 4-19

BANDWIDTH

- Your self-imposed limitations that keep you within your comfort zone.
- To broaden your bandwidth, you must take inventory of your skill sets and your known self-defined boundaries.

Slide 4-20

- c. **Bandwidth** involves your default positions based upon your known approaches or abilities for exercising leadership with adaptive challenges. Bandwidth involves your self-imposed limitations that keep you within your comfort zone.
- To broaden your bandwidth, you must take inventory of your skill sets and your known self-defined boundaries.
 - In the situation of a difficult conversation, you may find the need to exercise a wide range of approaches.

Who would be willing to share a situation in which you did not feel that you had the techniques to be successful?



Slide 4-21

- What was missing from your repertoire or ability to be successful?
- How much of this was related to self-imposed limitations?



Slide 4-22

PLANNING THROUGH ANALYSIS (cont'd)

- Perform gap analysis to assess the current reality as opposed to desired outcome.
- Assess your position.
- What is your power base?
- Assess danger zones.

Slide 4-23

C. Gap analysis.

Gap analysis assesses the perception of current reality and the aspirations surrounding the desired outcome.

1. Is the issue one of a technical problem?
2. Is the issue an adaptive challenge?
3. What currently exists that is beneficial to the conversation?
4. What currently exists that is a distracter to the conversation, i.e., does the employee have a very sick family member?
5. Have you anticipated how this person will react?

D. Assess the position.

Assess the position from which you will initiate the conversation.

1. From what position of authority will you engage in this conversation — formal or informal?
2. From where are you deriving your authorization?
3. In this conversation, do you know the expectations of your authorizers?

E. What is your power base?


1. When entering a difficult conversation, it is beneficial to have assessed and understood your power base.
2. To what extent does your authority allow you to initiate this conversation?

F. Assess danger zones.

Assess danger zones, i.e., the person with whom you are having the conversation may react in a way you cannot prepare for — so anticipate all reactions.

1. What situations or perceptions may exist that could compromise your authority, authorization or power base?
2. Be cautious of “alligators in the pond” — they can come out of nowhere and bite you. “Alligators” are points of danger that are not seen in the issue or within those participating in the matter, but can come out of nowhere and derail efforts. As thorough an assessment as possible of all participants and their expectations and/or desires may help prevent surprises, but always be aware that issues may be lurking below the surface.

- Has anyone been in a situation where he or she was attacked or marginalized for raising an issue?
- Who would be willing to share?



Slide 4-24

III. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Determine the conversational environment:

- When? — When is the most appropriate time to initiate the conversation?
- Where? — Where the conversation occurs can influence the process.
- How? — How a conversation takes place can affect the process.

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-25

A. Determining conversational environment — When? Where? How? (Stone et al., 2010)

1. When is the most appropriate time to initiate the conversation? At the beginning of the day, end of the day, start of shift, end of shift? Is there ever a good time?

Remember, it may seem as if there is never a good time for a difficult conversation, but the exercise of leadership may be needed at times that are apparently inconvenient for everyone.

2. Where the conversation occurs can influence the process.
 - a. Consider the desired outcome and purpose when considering location.

- b. Do you go to them or do they come to you?
 - c. Some conversations may be best conducted on neutral ground, particularly those in which antagonistic relationships exist (labor-management meetings, divorce mediation, reconciliation meetings).
3. How a conversation takes place can affect the process.
- a. Will it be face to face, via telephone, video conferencing?
 - b. Consider how today's varying communication media may be effective or ineffective.
 - c. Distance communication processes do not remove the difficulty of these conversations.

-
- How might the location of a difficult conversation affect your power base?
 - In what ways might location influence issues or "elephants in the room"?



Slide 4-26

DVD PRESENTATION

"THE KING'S SPEECH"



Slide 4-27

OWNING YOUR PIECE OF THE PIE

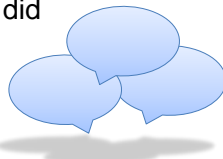
- To plan for and execute a successful difficult conversation, you must be willing to assess and accept three things about yourself:
 - You will make mistakes.
 - You must assess, accept, learn and move on from your mistakes.
 - Your intentions are complex. Be honest with yourself about your true intent.

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 4-28

B. Owing your piece of the pie (Stone et al., 2010).

1. Planning for and executing a successful difficult conversation requires that you be willing to assess and accept three things about yourself:
 - a. You will make mistakes. It is natural, because the exercise of leadership is not a perfect science or form of art. You become even more susceptible to making mistakes by the very nature of having a difficult conversation.
 - b. You must assess, accept, learn and move on from your mistakes, or you will not be able to have meaningful and successful conversations.
 - c. Your intentions are complex, even if you think they are not. Difficult conversations are complex and so are the intentions of all involved.
 - Assess your intentions. Be honest with yourself about your true intent.

- Recall another difficult conversation that you have had. Was your intent known beforehand or did it change in the middle?
- How much of your intent was really all about your needs and how much was about the needs of others?



Slide 4-29

- If you had a chance to do it over, would your intent be different?
- Why or why not?



Slide 4-30

OWNING YOUR PIECE OF THE PIE (cont'd)


- Assessing and taking responsibility for your own contribution to the issue or problem requires deep reflection and honesty.
- It is not easy, but it is essential.

Slide 4-31

2. The process of assessing and taking responsibility for your own contribution to the issue or problem requires deep reflection and honesty. It is not easy, but it is essential.


Using the difficult conversation you just considered:

- How much of the problem was yours?
- Did you own it beforehand? If no, what stopped you?
- If yes, how did that influence the conversation?



Slide 4-32

Recall what you learned about your authority and authorizations. What are some situations that would cause you to exceed your given or known authority?



Slide 4-33

EXCEEDING YOUR AUTHORITY

- Leadership is a foundational part of conducting a difficult conversation.
- Difficult conversations are about facing adaptive challenges. Thus, they often require taking risks and going beyond given lines of authority and the boundaries of authorization.
- The trick is to know when to go beyond, and how far to go.

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002
Slide 4-34

C. Exceeding your authority (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

1. The exercise of leadership is a foundational part of conducting a difficult conversation.

2. In raw form, difficult conversations are about facing adaptive challenges; as such, they often require one to take a risk and go beyond given lines of authority and the boundaries of authorization.
3. In most cases, the “elephant in the room” will never be addressed until someone puts one foot over the perceived boundaries. The trick is to know when to go beyond and how far to go.

STAYING ALIVE DURING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

To stay in the game you have to:

- Think politically — be curious rather than certain.
- Accept that casualties may be a result of the conversation.
- Develop confidants that become your sounding board.

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002
Slide 4-35

D. Staying alive during difficult conversations (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

1. As noted throughout, the exercise of leadership is dangerous business. To stay in the game, you have to think politically, accept that there will be casualties, and develop allies and confidants.
2. All leadership action involves a degree of politics — and none more so than a difficult conversation. These conversations involve confronting the status quo, challenging existing cultures, or possibly someone’s identity.
3. Think politically, which means be curious rather than certain.
 - a. Be aware — be in the moment.
 - b. Find partners (allies) for your effort.
 - c. Know your opposition and know where they are.
 - d. Acknowledge losses that those involved may have experienced or will experience.
 - e. During the conversation, model the desired behavior.

4. Accept that casualties may be a result of the conversation. As difficult as it can be, through the exercise of leadership and difficult conversation people may feel hurt, betrayed, angry, disillusioned, or depressed.

Your task is to recognize these realities and be caring, but move on. Adaptive situations are not rectified by maintaining the status quo.

5. Develop confidants who become your sounding board. Those who will, as a responsibility to you, challenge your assumptions, play the devil's advocate, and support your efforts in confidence.

IDENTIFY RESOURCE NEEDS AND AVAILABILITIES

- Consider the actual conversation and what might be needed for assistance based on the situation.

Slide 4-36

E. Identify resource needs and availabilities.

1. Before initiating a difficult conversation, assess resources needed to achieve your identified purpose. What is available or what do you need to obtain?

IDENTIFY RESOURCE NEEDS AND AVAILABILITIES (cont'd)

- Consider if you need:
 - Employee assistance program (EAP).
 - Critical incident stress management (CISM).
 - Human relations representatives.
 - Legal counsel.
 - Security or law enforcement.
 - A private room.

Slide 4-37

2. Consider the actual conversation and what might be needed to assist based on the situation. Consider if you need:
 - a. Employee assistance program (EAP).
 - b. Critical incident stress management (CISM).
 - c. Human relations representatives.
 - d. Legal counsel.
 - e. Security or law enforcement.
3. Based on subject matter, you may need a private room, tissues (these conversations can be emotional), water, etc.

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ACTIVITY 4.1

Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 2

Purpose

Complete the development of a plan to conduct a difficult conversation.

Directions

1. Work individually on this activity.
2. Refer to the completed worksheet for Activity 3.1. This activity is Part 2 of that worksheet. This activity, along with Part 1, will be used to assist in future course work.
3. Using the same issue you used in Activity 3.1, complete Part 2 by doing the following:
 - a. Identify the intended purpose for the conversation.
 - b. Identify whether the issue is a technical problem or an adaptive challenge.
 - c. List what factors/influences currently exist that are beneficial to the conversation.
 - d. List what factors/influences currently exist that are distracters to the conversation.
 - e. Identify the power base from which this conversation will come.
 - f. Determine when, where and how this conversation will occur.
 - g. Identify your defaults for this conversation.
 - h. Identify your ownership factors for the issue.
4. Record your responses on the provided worksheet.
5. You have 30 minutes to complete the worksheet.

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ACTIVITY 4.1 (cont'd)

Worksheet

Complete this worksheet as fully as possible. Be as open and as trusting as you can be. Use reality-based scenarios.

1. What is your intended purpose for this conversation?

2. Is this a technical problem or an adaptive challenge?

3. List what factors/influences currently exist that are beneficial to the conversation.

4. List what factors/influences currently exist that are distracters to the conversation.



5. What is the power base from which this conversation will come?

6. When, where and how will this conversation occur?

7. What are my defaults for this conversation?

8. What are my ownership factors for the issue?

IV. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- What is your purpose?
- Planning through analysis.
- Planning considerations for a difficult conversation.

Slide 4-39

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UNIT 5: TOOLS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:



- 5.1 *Apply the Ladder of Inference Tool, the Left-Hand Column Tool, and the Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy Tool to bridge the gap between an individual's impressions of a situation and what's really happening.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:

- 5.1 *Identify tools that can help avoid misunderstandings during difficult conversations.*

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UNIT 5: TOOLS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Slide 5-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVE

Identify tools that can help avoid misunderstandings during difficult conversations.

Slide 5-2

I. LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL

LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL

Difficult conversations are often made more difficult by our own self-generated beliefs — beliefs that are derived from personal observations from which we infer meaning and value based on past experiences.

— Senge, 1994


Slide 5-3

A. Ladder of Inference Tool (Senge, 1994).

1. Difficult conversations are often made more difficult by our own self-generated beliefs — beliefs that are derived from personal observations from which we infer meaning and value based on past experiences.
2. Peter Senge (1994) states that our ability to achieve the results we truly desire is eroded by our feelings that:
 - a. Our beliefs are the truth.
 - b. The truth is obvious.
 - c. Our beliefs are based on real data.
3. Following the work of Chris Argyris, Senge adapts what Argyris calls the ladder of inference, which he describes as “a common mental pathway or increasing abstraction, often leading to misguided beliefs” (1994, p. 243).

RUNGS OF THE LADDER

- Sixth rung: The actions I take based on my beliefs.
- Fifth rung: The beliefs I adopt.
- Fourth rung: The conclusions I draw.
- Third rung: Assumptions I make based on the meanings I added.
- Second rung: The meanings I add.
- First rung: The data “I” select.
- Base of ladder: Observable “data and experiences.”



— Senge, 1994 Slide 5-4

B. Rungs of the ladder (Senge, 1994, p. 243).

1. Sixth rung: The actions I take based on my beliefs.
2. Fifth rung: The beliefs I adopt.
3. Fourth rung: The conclusions I draw.
4. Third rung: Assumptions I make based on the meanings I added.
5. Second rung: The meanings I add (cultural and personal).
6. First rung: The data I select.

7. Base of ladder: Observable “data and experiences.”

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL

- The first step is to recognize that it is a natural life process to add meaning to and draw conclusion from what we observe.
- When planning for a difficult conversation, the rungs of the ladder provide opportunity to challenge ourselves and the data before establishing a plan of action.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-5

C. How to use the Ladder of Inference Tool (Senge, 1994).

1. The first step is to recognize that it is a natural life process to add meaning to and draw conclusion from what we observe.
2. When planning for a difficult conversation, the rungs of the ladder provide opportunity to challenge ourselves and the data before establishing a plan of action. The ladder is a tool of reflection. It is also a tool to use during the active conversation.
3. It may be used in the following manner:

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Base of ladder: Observable “data and experiences”:
 - Do I/we have all the data available?
 - Are the data reliable and valid?



Slide 5-6


a. Base of ladder.

- Do I/we have all the data available?

- Are the data reliable and valid?

USING THE LADDER OF
INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- First rung: The data I select:
 - Why am I/are we selecting these specific data?
 - Are the selected data appropriate to the issue?
 - Are the data comprehensive enough to provide a balanced perspective?
 - Do we all agree on the selected data?




Slide 5-7

b. First rung.

- Why am I/are we selecting these specific data?
- Are the selected data appropriate to the issue?
- Are the data comprehensive enough to provide a balanced perspective?
- Do we all agree on the selected data?

USING THE LADDER OF
INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Second rung: The meanings I add:
 - What do these data mean to me/us?
 - What specific cultural meaning am I/are we applying?
 - What specific personal meaning am I/are we applying?
 - How can I/we clearly articulate this basis for the assigned meanings?



Slide 5-8


c. Second rung.

- What do these data mean to me/us?
- What specific cultural meaning am I/are we applying?

- What specific personal meaning am I/are we applying?
- How can I/we clearly articulate this basis for the assigned meanings?

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Third rung: Assumptions I make:
 - What are my/our assumptions?
 - How do the data and applied meaning support my/our assumptions?
 - Can I/we clearly articulate our reasoning?




Slide 5-9

d. Third rung.

- What are my/our assumptions?
- How do the data and applied meaning support my/our assumptions?
- Can I/we clearly articulate our reasoning?

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Fourth rung: The conclusions I draw:
 - What are my/our specific conclusions?
 - How do the data, meaning and assumptions support my/our conclusions?
 - Are my/our conclusions objectively defensible?



Slide 5-10


e. Fourth rung.

- What are my/our specific conclusions?

- How do the data, meaning and assumptions support my/our conclusions?
- Are my/our conclusions objectively defensible?

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Fifth rung: The beliefs I adopt:
 - What specific beliefs do I/we adopt about this issue/problem?
 - Am I/are we confident that the beliefs are validated through our process?




Slide 5-11

f. Fifth rung.

- What specific beliefs do I/we adopt about this issue/problem?
- Am I/are we confident that the beliefs are validated through our process?

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Sixth rung: The actions I take:
 - What actions will I/we now take based on climbing the ladder?



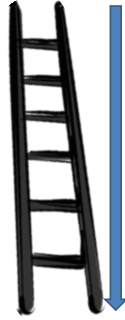
Slide 5-12

g. Sixth rung.

- What actions will I/we now take based on climbing the ladder?

USING THE LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL (cont'd)

- Climbing down the ladder:
 - Effective leadership practices will return to the base of the ladder and begin the process all over again in order to create and sustain a learning environment.



Slide 5-13

h. Climbing down the ladder.

- Effective leadership practices will return to the base of the ladder and begin the process all over again in order to create and sustain a learning environment.

LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL EXAMPLE

- **Base of ladder:** According to dispatch reports, there seems to be an increase in the time it takes some units to turnout of the station after an alarm sounds. It seems to be associated with only one station.

Slide 5-14

D. Ladder of Inference Tool example.

1. **Base of ladder:** According to dispatch reports, there seems to be an increase in the time it takes some units to turnout of the station after an alarm sounds. It seems to be associated with only one station.

LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **First rung:** I am going to take a more detailed look at this station's time for turning out on alarms. I need to identify a more extended period of time of data to review. I need to be sure the data I am getting is what I have asked for. I need to compare this station with the other stations' data.

Slide 5-15

2. **First rung:** I am going to take a more detailed look at this station's time for turning out on alarms. I need to identify a more extended period of time of data to review. I need to be sure the data I am getting is what I have asked for. I need to compare this station with the other stations' data.

LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **Second rung:** We have always had a strong culture of rapid response with quick turnout times as a critical component. As the operations chief, it is important for me to have the personnel turning out as rapidly as possible. I am responsible and accountable for response times.

Slide 5-16

3. **Second rung:** We have always had a strong culture of rapid response with quick turnout times as a critical component. As the operations chief, it is important for me to have the personnel turning out as rapidly as possible. I am responsible and accountable for response times.

LADDER OF INFERENCE
TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **Third rung:** I assume there is nothing wrong with the dispatch system, because no one has complained of any technical difficulties.

Slide 5-17

4. **Third rung:** I assume there is nothing wrong with the dispatch system, because no one has complained of any technical difficulties.

LADDER OF INFERENCE
TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **Fourth rung:** The data show that no other stations have longer turnout times, so there must be a personnel issue at this station leading to the increased time.
- **Fifth rung:** I believe that the Company Officer (CO) is not exercising appropriate supervisory practices.

Slide 5-18

5. **Fourth rung:** The data show that no other stations have longer turnout times, so there must be a personnel issue at this station leading to the increased time.
6. **Fifth rung:** I believe that the Company Officer (CO) is not exercising appropriate supervisory practices.

LADDER OF INFERENCE TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **Sixth rung:** I am going to schedule a conference with the CO, present the data, and work with the officer to develop a plan for improvement.

Slide 5-19

7. **Sixth rung:** I am going to schedule a conference with the CO, present the data, and work with the officer to develop a plan for improvement.

II. LEFT-HAND COLUMN TOOL

LEFT-HAND COLUMN TOOL

- Provides an opportunity to examine the difference between what was said and what you were thinking.
- Helps explore your mental models about a given situation and develop skills of reflection.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-20

A. The Left-Hand Column Tool (Senge, 1994).

1. The Left-Hand Column Tool provides an opportunity to examine the difference between what was said and what you were thinking.
2. The tool helps explore your mental models about a given situation and helps develop skills of reflection.

FOUR-STEP PROCESS

- Step 1:
 - Reflect upon the difficult situation you are engaged in.
 - Write a brief narrative of the situation to include your purpose, desired outcome, known challenges, and what might happen if the situation is left unaddressed.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-21

B. Four-step process (Senge, 1994).

1. Step 1: Reflect upon the difficult situation you are engaged in; write a brief narrative of the situation to include your purpose, desired outcome, known challenges, and what might happen if the situation is left unaddressed.

FOUR-STEP PROCESS (cont'd)

- Step 2:
 - Recall the conversations that have occurred or might have occurred had the issue been raised.
 - Using a two-column format, in the right-hand column, write what was actually said or what you are confident would have been said if the conversation had occurred.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-22

2. Step 2: Recall the conversations that have occurred or might have occurred had the issue been raised. Using a two-column format, in the right-hand column, write what was actually said or what you are confident would have been said if the conversation had occurred.

FOUR-STEP PROCESS (cont'd)

- Step 3:
 - In the left-hand column, write what you were thinking and feeling, or what you really wanted to say but did not.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-23

3. Step 3: In the left-hand column, write what you were thinking and feeling, or what you really wanted to say but did not.

FOUR-STEP PROCESS (cont'd)

- Step 4:
 - Allow an appropriate period of time to pass, and then go back and reflect on the left-hand column.
 - Deeply consider the feelings expressed internally and challenge yourself.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-24

4. Step 4: Allow an appropriate period of time to pass (this will vary from a few hours to perhaps several days, but not so long as to lose memory of the conversation). Then go back and reflect on the left-hand column. Deeply consider the feelings expressed internally and challenge yourself.
- a. Why did I really feel this way?
 - b. What was my intent/purpose?
 - c. How might my thoughts have affected the conversation?
 - d. Were my assumptions valid, or did I leap to abstractions or generalizations not supported by data?
 - e. Why did I not say what I was thinking or feeling?
 - f. How can I use this to contribute to an improved conversation?

LEFT-HAND COLUMN TOOL EXAMPLE

What Di is thinking and feeling but not saying:	What Di and Bill are saying:
It was three weeks until camp and I didn't think he was bothered. I was hoping we would catch up.	Bill: Di, we're a bit behind with our organization for the camp. Perhaps we should meet after school.
I need to make it clear that I'm willing to take responsibility for some things, but I don't want to be the one left holding the bag for this.	Di: I've been very concerned about the camp, but I've been very busy with reports and family stuff. But, of course, we can squeeze in a meeting.
He never offers his help until most of the work has been done. Why can't he get organized earlier? But it's too late now to bring this up.	Bill: Well it's occurred to me that we could use better coordination between us. There are probably some ways I could help.
Not helping sooner is the real reason we're behind. He knows I will do the work and never offers help.	Di: Well, I'm happy to talk through any ideas you have in mind.
No, he wants me to do it so he doesn't have to.	Bill: I don't have anything specific in mind.
I'll have it all done by Thursday and just tell him what to do. It is so unfair.	Di: Oh, well maybe we can meet Thursday and make a list of what needs to be done.

Slide 5-25

C. Left-Hand Column Tool example.

What Di is thinking and feeling but not saying:	What Di and Bill are saying:
It was three weeks until camp and I didn't think he was bothered. I was hoping we would catch up.	Bill: Di, we're a bit behind with our organization for the camp. Perhaps we should meet after school.
I need to make it clear that I'm willing to take responsibility for some things, but I don't want to be the one left holding the bag for this.	Di: I've been very concerned about the camp, but I've been very busy with reports and family stuff. But, of course, we can squeeze in a meeting.
He never offers his help until most of the work has been done. Why can't he get organized earlier? But it's too late now to bring this up.	Bill: Well it's occurred to me that we could use better coordination between us. There are probably some ways I could help.
Not helping sooner is the real reason we're behind. He knows I will do the work and never offers help.	Di: Well, I'm happy to talk through any ideas you have in mind.
No, he wants me to do it so he doesn't have to.	Bill: I don't have anything specific in mind.
I'll have it all done by Thursday and just tell him what to do. It is so unfair.	Di: Oh, well maybe we can meet Thursday and make a list of what needs to be done.

III. BALANCING INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY TOOL

BALANCING INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY TOOL

- Advocating strongly without balanced inquiry often contributes to nonresolution of issues.
- Inquiry, when used effectively, provides opportunity to explore other points of view in an open and honest manner.

— Senge, 1994

Slide 5-26

- A. Everyone has an opinion. Everyone, at some point or other, desires to be heard. However, advocating strongly without balanced inquiry often contributes to nonresolution of issues. The difficult conversation will remain difficult (Senge, 1994).
- B. Inquiry, when used effectively, provides opportunity to explore other points of view in an open and honest manner. It is the basis for the concept of seeking to understand first before seeking to be understood (Senge, 1994).

BALANCING INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY TOOL (cont'd)

- When balanced, inquiry and advocacy helps expand your understanding of another person's position, and his or her understanding of yours.

Slide 5-27

- C. When used in a balanced manner, inquiry and advocacy helps expand your understanding of another person's position, and his or her understanding of yours.

GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSING

- When advocating:
 - Make your reasoning known (explicit).
 - Encourage others to explore your perspective and present different views.
 - Encourage others to look for gaps in your reasoning.
 - Actively seek views that are different from yours.

Slide 5-28

D. Guidelines for processing.

1. When advocating:

- a. Make your reasoning known (explicit).
- b. Encourage others to explore your perspective and present different views.
- c. Encourage others to look for gaps in your reasoning.
- d. Actively seek views that are different from yours.

GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSING (cont'd)

- When inquiring:
 - State your assumptions about others' perspectives clearly, and affirm that they are assumptions.
 - State the data on which your assumptions are based.
 - If you are not going to be genuine when exploring others' views, then don't explore them!

Slide 5-29

2. When inquiring:

- a. State your assumptions about others' perspectives clearly, and affirm that they are assumptions.

- b. State the data on which your assumptions are based.
- c. If you are not going to be genuine when exploring others' views, then don't explore them! They will know if you are not truly interested in different views.

IF AT AN IMPASSE ...

If no one is interested any longer in exploring their own views:

- Determine what data or logical thoughts might cause them to change their minds.
- Seek to collaborate on opportunities for other methods of inquiry that may provide new insights.

Slide 5-30

3. If at an impasse (when no one is interested any longer in exploring their own views):
 - a. Try to determine what data or logical thoughts might cause them to change their minds.
 - b. Seek to collaborate on opportunities for other methods of inquiry that may provide new insights.

IF THERE IS HESITATION ...

If there is hesitation to express views (yours or theirs) or to consider alternate ideas:

- Lead by example and encourage others to "think out loud" about what is making it difficult.
- Explore whether it is the situation, or perhaps the participants, that are making it difficult.
- Seek out a mutual approach to alternative ways to overcome the challenges/barriers.

Slide 5-31

4. If there is hesitation to express views (yours or theirs) or to consider alternate ideas:

- a. Lead by example and encourage others to “think out loud” about what is making it difficult.
- b. Explore whether it is the situation, or perhaps the participants, that are making it difficult.
- c. Seek out a mutual approach to alternative ways to overcome the challenges/barriers.

AVOIDING INQUIRY PITFALLS

- Do not use questions as a means to make statements.
- If you do not have a question, then do not make one up.
- Do not use inquiry as a means to “cross-examine.”

Slide 5-32

5. Avoiding inquiry pitfalls.

- a. Do not use questions as a means to make statements.
 - Example: Are you really going to spend your entire budget? What is really meant is, “We need to be conservative,” or, “I need extra funds for my project.”
- b. If you do not have a question, then do not make one up.
- c. Do not use inquiry as a means to “cross-examine.” Questions framed in this manner are often perceived as you saying, “I am right and you are wrong.”
 - Example: You are planning on spending all those funds. Isn’t that right?

AVOIDING INQUIRY PITFALLS (cont'd)

- Use open-ended questions.
- Ask for more data, if appropriate.
- Seek out classification of reasoning and desired outcomes.

Slide 5-33

- d. Use open-ended questions. Avoid yes/no type questions that do not allow exploration of ideas and feelings.
- e. Ask for more data if appropriate, but avoid seeking additional information merely as a means of stalling or avoiding.
- f. Seek out classification of reasoning and desired outcomes.

BALANCING INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY TOOL EXAMPLE

- **Inquiry:** Is there anything I need to know that may be causing a delay in your alarm turnout times?
- **Advocacy:** Quick turnout times are critical to meeting our department's overall response time goals.

Slide 5-34

E. Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy Tool example.

1. **Inquiry:** Captain, is there anything I need to know that may be causing a delay in your alarm turnout times?
2. **Advocacy:** Quick turnout times are critical to meeting our department's overall response time goals.

BALANCING INQUIRY AND
ADVOCACY TOOL EXAMPLE (cont'd)

- **Inquiry:** What do you see as a way to improve turnout times?
- **Advocacy:** Quicker alarm turnout times allow our units to respond at safer speeds rather than driving faster to make up time for slow starts.

Slide 5-35

3. **Inquiry:** Captain, what do you see as a way to improve turnout times?
4. **Advocacy:** Quicker alarm turnout times allows our units to respond at safer speeds rather than driving faster to make up time for slow starts.

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ACTIVITY 5.1

Using the Tools

Purpose



Apply the tools to a recent difficult or challenging issue to prepare for a difficult conversation.

Directions

1. Work in a small group for this activity.
2. Refer to the list of challenges you created in Activity 1.1: All Problems Are Not Alike, and select one of the challenges listed.
3. Each group will be assigned a tool for a difficult conversation. Apply your assigned tool to your selected challenge.
4. Be prepared to present your challenge and how you applied your assigned tool to the class.
5. You have approximately 40 minutes to complete the activity.

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IV. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- Ladder of Inference Tool.
- Left-Hand Column Tool.
- Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy Tool.

Slide 5-37

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UNIT 6: CONDUCTING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to:



- 6.1 *Apply their plan for conducting a difficult conversation.*

ENABLING OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- 6.1 *Identify the leadership skills to use when conducting a difficult conversation.*
- 6.2 *Identify the five steps for conducting a difficult conversation.*
-

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UNIT 6: CONDUCTING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Slide 6-1

ENABLING OBJECTIVES


- Identify the leadership skills to use when conducting a difficult conversation.
- Identify the five steps for conducting a difficult conversation.

Slide 6-2

I. SKILLS FOR EXERCISING LEADERSHIP IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

DVD PRESENTATION

“THE KING’S SPEECH”



Slide 6-3

**SKILLS FOR EXERCISING LEADERSHIP
IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION**

- Reframing:
 - Restates the basics of what is being said in statements or concepts that are more helpful in reaching and maintaining a learning conversation.
 - Moves dialogue away from the blame game.
 - Can help defuse anger.

Slide 6-4

A. Reframing.

1. In difficult conversations, it is important to be able to frame the issues and positions in a manner that promotes understanding and creates a learning conversation.
2. Reframing in the context of a difficult conversation involves taking the basics of what is being said and restating or “translating” the basics into statements or concepts that are more helpful in reaching and maintaining a learning conversation.
3. Reframing helps move dialogue back on track. It is also a means to gaining shared understanding.
4. Anything said can be reframed to gain clarity and understanding.
5. Reframing helps move dialogue away from the blame game — those conversations in which one person is directing blame toward the other.

Example: “This would not have happened if you had done your job!”

6. Reframing can help defuse anger and allow the other person to see, perhaps, how he or she might also have contributed to the issue or problem.

Example: “I know I contributed to the problem, and I am learning to understand how we might work together to resolve the concerns.”

7. Reframing, as noted in the previous example, assists in moving from “either/or” dialogue to an “and” perspective.

**SKILLS FOR EXERCISING LEADERSHIP
IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (cont'd)**

- Listen, listen, listen:
 - Listen, don't just hear.
 - Focus as deeply when listening to the other perspective as you want the other person to do when you express your view.
 - Listen to the tone and volume of the conversation.

Slide 6-5

B. Listen, listen, listen.

1. A fundamental of effective communication is to listen intently, not just to hear.
2. Be persistent in your listening. Focus as deeply when listening to the other perspective as you want the other person to do when you express your view.
3. Listen to the tone and volume of the conversation.

**SKILLS FOR EXERCISING LEADERSHIP
IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (cont'd)**

- Stating the dynamics at play:
 - Behaviors, such as continually interrupting or the blame game, can be impediments/avoidance tactics.
 - Simply state what is being observed (e.g., the behaviors acting as impediments).
 - "Your continual interrupting is not allowing me to explain the problem completely."

Slide 6-6

C. Stating the dynamics at play.

1. Some difficult conversations require that you state the “dynamics” at play, because they may be as important as anything else when seeking a learning conversation.

2. Behaviors, such as continually interrupting or not letting go of the blame game, can be impediments individuals may use as an avoidance tactic in an attempt to “dismiss” you.
3. Simply state what is being observed.

Example: Your continual interrupting is not allowing me to explain the problem completely.

**SKILLS FOR EXERCISING LEADERSHIP
IN A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (cont'd)**

- Stating the dynamics at play:
 - Aids in resolution and prescriptive action.
 - May lead to increased tension — be cautious.

Slide 6-7

4. Stating the dynamic at play aids in resolution and prescriptive action.
5. Stating the dynamic may lead to increased tension, so be cautious. Calling someone out on his or her behavior can be dangerous; however, not doing so may leave an “elephant in the room.”
6. Stating the dynamic may best be left as a last-ditch effort.

II. STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

**STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A
DIFFICULT CONVERSATION**

- Step 1: Walk through the three types of conversations.
- Step 2: Determine your purpose and whether you should raise the issue.
- Step 3: Create a third story.
- Step 4: Explore all sides.
- Step 5: Solve the problem.

— Stone et al., 2010
Slide 6-8

According to Stone, Patton and Heen (2010), there are five steps to plan for in a difficult conversation. They include:

- A. Step 1: Walk through the three types of conversations.
 - 1. “What happened” conversation.
 - a. Your story.
 - Your intent and the impact on you.
 - b. Their story.
 - Their intent and the impact on them.
 - c. Contributing to the issue/problem.
 - Theirs and mine.
 - 2. “Feeling” conversation.

What are my underlying attributions and judgments?
 - 3. “Identity” conversation.
 - a. How is this issue/problem affecting my identity?
 - b. How might my identity be threatened?
- B. Step 2: Determine your purpose and whether you should raise the issue.
 - 1. What do I hope to accomplish?
 - 2. Decision time — Is this the best approach? What happens if I do not raise the issue?
- C. Step 3: Create a third story.
 - 1. Prepare to describe the issue/problem as the difference between your story and theirs.
 - 2. Share your purpose for raising this issue.
 - 3. Ask them to act as “partners” in solving the situation.
- D. Step 4: Explore all sides.

1. Listen with intent to gain understanding.
2. Share/Express your perspectives and basis for these views.
3. Reframe for deeper understanding.

E. Step 5: Solve the problem.

1. Seek out and create options.
2. Determine or visualize the standards for what should take place (be cautious of a one-way approach or standard — they are rarely sustained).
3. Develop action plans for how to keep dialogue open as everyone moves forward.

ACTIVITY 6.1

Conducting a Difficult Conversation

Purpose



Conduct a difficult conversation.

Directions

1. Work in a small group.
2. Refer to the Preparing for Difficult Conversations Part 1 and Part 2 worksheets from Activities 3.1: Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 1 and 4.1: Preparing for Difficult Conversations, Part 2, on which you created your plan for conducting a difficult conversation.
3. Within your group, present your topic of conversation and your plan. Using your plan as a guide, conduct the conversation using the group members as role players.
4. At the conclusion of the conversation, debrief the process within the small group, using the following guiding questions:
 - a. What was the least effective component of the conversation?
 - b. What was the most effective component of the conversation?
 - c. What specifically do I need to modify to achieve a higher level of a learning conversation?
5. Using the feedback provided by your group, update your plan in preparation for conducting the actual conversation.
6. Continue the small group process until all members have completed the activity.
7. You have approximately 65 minutes.

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III. SUMMARY



SUMMARY

- Skills for exercising leadership in a difficult conversation.
- Steps for conducting a difficult conversation.

Slide 6-10

FINAL THOUGHT

“Exercising Leadership is a way to give meaning to your life by contributing to the lives of others.”

— Heifetz & Linsky, 2002
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ACRONYMS

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ACRONYMS

ALS	advanced life support
CISM	critical incident stress management
CO	Company Officer
EAP	employee assistance program
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
ESS: ELTDC	“Executive Skills Series: Exercising Leadership Through Difficult Conversations”
LODDs	line-of-duty deaths
NFA	National Fire Academy
R-T-C	Reaction-to-Change
SM	Student Manual
VGA	video graphics array

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