

Principled Academic Leadership

Session 4: Difficult Conversations & Personal Scripts

By the National Center for Principled Leadership & Research Ethics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

based on the work of C. K. Gunsalus

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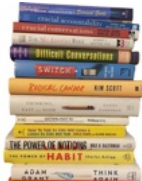
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1

Homework

1. Find a book to read that matches your growth interests.
2. Look over the And Stance worksheet to discuss.
3. Create a **ONE MINUTE** or **shorter** elevator pitch for your unit, connected to its purpose and mission.



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remember: one minute!

Deliver an elevator pitch for your unit.

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Managing Difficult Conversations



Manage yourself



Develop your skills

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4



5

Difficult Conversations

What
situations
give you
heartburn?

Do the people
involved have
anything in
common?

What is it?
Can you
articulate it?

6

Long-Term Relationships

7

Scenario 1:
The other person is
totally off base,
confused, neurotic,
stupid and/or just
generally wrong.

**It's likely some
combination of
the two.**

Scenario 2:
The other person
might have a point; you
could be mistaken or
have misunderstood.

8

Whichever it is, **you** are in an unpleasant situation.

9

Reality: *The only conduct you control is your own*

10



Dalcomyn Photography

11

Outcome?

Tell the person off?

Never deal with the person again?

Solve a problem?

12

GOAL:

Layer professional skills over your personality and reactions.

13

GOAL:

Layer professional skills over your personality and reactions.

- 1 Know your conflict comfort and style



14

GOAL:

Layer professional skills over your personality and reactions.

- 1 Know your conflict comfort and style
- 2 Gain specific skills
- 3 Practice, so they're accessible when needed

15



Develop your skills



Learn a little social psychology



Listen well, ask good questions




Align with others





Develop good personal scripts


16



- 👉 Egocentrism bias
- 🔄 Reciprocity norms
- 🐾 Sinister attribution error

17





Sinister Attribution Bias

Never attribute to malice that which incompetence will explain.

Knoll Corollary

Never attribute to incompetence that which temporary inattention or miscommunication will explain.


18



trust
MATTERS






19



Build Rapport, Trust

- 🔊 Listen
- 🔊 Listen
- 🔊 Listen
- ? Ask questions

20

Exercise

"Uh huh" (nodding)

"Tell me more about that."

"Help me understand more about...."




A large teal graphic of five question marks "?????" is centered at the top.

Below it, the text reads: "Negotiators who ask more questions get better results."

On the left, a circular image shows two people in a meeting, with the text "Persuasion Negotiation" below it.

On the right, two bullet points are listed:


- ? How good are your questions?
- 🔊 How well do you listen?



Persuasion
Emotions

Good moods promote creative thinking and openness to ideas.

People process information differently in different moods.



Emotion is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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25

Go-to Questions

"Can you show me?"

"Can you help me understand?"

"Is this right?"

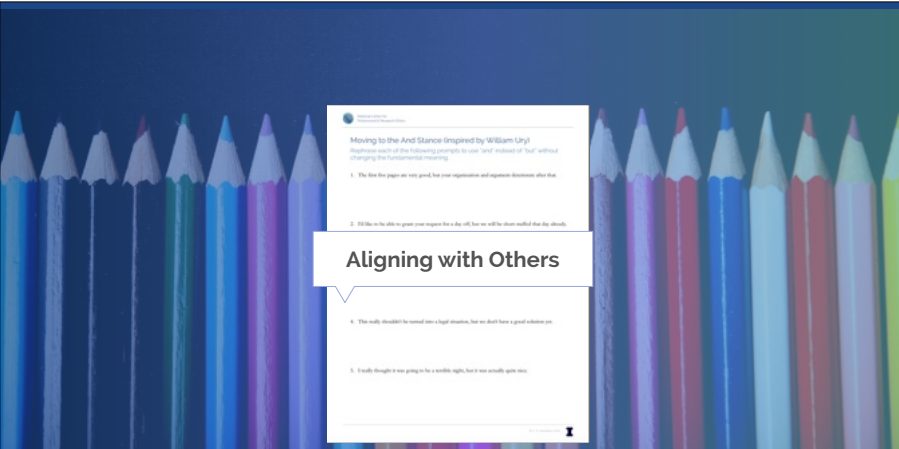
"Just to be clear, you're suggesting...?"

- 1 As a mark of a person who learns and cares about learning
- 2 To avoid cognitive errors (sinister attribution bias)
- 3 To prevent problems, defuse aggression spirals

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26



Moving to the And Stance (inspired by William Ury)
Replace each of the following prompts to use "and" instead of "but" without changing the fundamental meaning.

1. The five five pages are very good, but your organization will oppose decision after that.

2. We'll be able to give your request for a day off, but we will be down half the day already.

Aligning with Others

3. The really shouldn't be moved into a legal division, but we don't have a great solution yet.

4. I really thought it was going to be a terrible night, but it was actually quite nice.

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27

Aligning with Others

- Improves audience attention, retention
- Changes your alignment
- Reduces conflict, aggression spirals
- Takes constant practice!

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28



Aligning with Others

- ✓ Collect YESes
- ✓ Agree wherever you can
- ✓ Agree without conceding
- ✓ Acknowledge the person
- ✓ Acknowledge the person's competence and authority
- ✓ Don't contradict, agree and build

William Ury, *Getting Past No*



Personal Scripts

Words you have prepared, in advance, and practiced, for predictable situations.

Personal Scripts

Preemptive

- 1 Speaking regularly about values & mission
- 2 Building it into a habit to ask questions about others, their interests
- 3 For anticipated events: You know it's coming (feedback, evaluation, difficult conversations)

Reactive

- 4 Buying time to think
- 5 Calling a pause in a topic or discussion that is getting off the rails, too heated
- 6 Turning the tables to the other/s: asking for solutions
- 7 Noting positives
- 8 Agreeing to disagree

Some Useful Scripts

buying time

"I need some time to reflect. Perhaps I could get back to you in about 20 minutes?"

I recall there is something about that in the policy manual. Let me review that and get back to you."

context boundary

buying time

"I'm so rushed right now, I couldn't do this justice. I'll carve out some dedicated time Wednesday afternoon."

"This will affect others as well as just you. As soon as I have had a chance to speak with each, I will decide."

topical boundary

Constructing Personal Scripts

- 1 Who is your audience (or audiences)?
 - 2 What message are you trying to convey?
 - 3 Have you framed questions to elicit information?
 - 4 Even if you are right, is it helpful? (Defensive people shut down)
 - 5 Does it advance the conversation or gain you information so you can advance the conversation?
- ➔ *How will you manage your tone?
Are you prepared to be and stay on the high road?*

Tone is Essential



Polite



Quiet



Respectful



Reframe as You Go
Set the Tone

- 1 Take out the emotion
- 2 Don't attribute motives
- 3 Name the common ground
- 4 Seek solutions
- 5 Stay positive
- 6 Stay on the high road

Assertion, not aggression.

More Useful Scripts

"I am interested in your success. It is my duty to share a candid evaluation with you so you can assess and adjust going forward."

"I'm not comfortable discussing that."

"Let's agree to disagree for now and both go have a good think about this. Let's try again tomorrow."

"I hear what you're saying and I respect how strongly you feel."

37

Scripts for Receiving Complaints



"What actions do you seek from me?"

"I need to find out how others view this matter. I will do that and get back to you."

"You need to do what you need to do."

38

Concepts, Phrases to Excise

~~*"You have to understand..." or "You need to..."*~~

~~*"You'll just have to trust me on this."*~~

~~*"I regret that you are unhappy with my decision."*~~

~~*"This is as hard for me as it is for you."*~~

39

Depersonalize conflict



40



41

Two Hard, Leveraging Changes

00:02

Spend the first two minutes of every interaction just making sure you have understood the other party's perspective.

No arguing back!



Replace "~~but~~" with "and" in your vocabulary and phrasing.

42

*You can win the battle
and still lose the war.*

43

*Change the script by
changing your lines.*

44



Homework

1. Review the definition of leadership you wrote in the first session, and update it, as appropriate.
2. Practice applying the And Stance in your everyday life. First, try to go one week without using "but" in an email, instead restructuring the statement with "and" in order to align with others. Then, try to go 24 hours without saying "but" at all.
3. Watch the Sorenson as an Ally scenario. Prepare to discuss.

Questions or concerns?

Key takeaways?