

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT DAY

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WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Defining Difficult Conversations

What happens if we avoid these conversations?

Avoiding the “Fool’s Choice” trap

Recommendations for success

Motivational Interviewing basics

Final thoughts

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Having that difficult conversation can be the one thing many of us dread most at work.

A 2015 survey of 2,000 workers found:

57% of respondents said they **would do almost anything to avoid a difficult conversation; and**

52% said that they would **rather put up with a negative situation at work than having to talk about it.**

WE'VE ALL BEEN HERE...

Many of us, including me, have hesitation and even fear and anxiety over difficult conversations

Moreover, as a leader, it is often expected that you know how to have these confronting conversations.

So what if you have never done this before?
Where do you begin?

How do you make sure it is done in a respectful and timely manner?

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W H A T I S A D I F F I C U L T C O N V E R S A T I O N ?

THREE ELEMENTS TO DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Opposing opinions

Strong emotions

High stakes



Examples:

- Ending a relationship
- Talking to a coworker who behaves offensively or makes suggestive comments
- Asking a friend to repay a loan
- Giving the boss feedback about her behavior
- Approaching a boss who is breaking his own safety or quality policies
- Critiquing a colleague's work
- Asking a roommate to move out
- Giving an unfavorable performance review
- Asking in-laws to quit interfering



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“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



WHY DO WE AVOID DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS?

10

Takes time

Emotions (ours and theirs)

Conflict

Protection

THE FOOL'S CHOICE

- We are conditioned to being 'nice' and to think that we can't be honest and respectful at the same time
- Consider between two bad alternatives
 - Speak up and hurt the relationship or feelings
 - Keep silent and never express the issue where it needs to be expressed

THE FOOL'S CHOICE

- This is a **MISTAKEN BELIEF.**
 - Strong relationships are built on clarity, mutual respect, and trust, not avoidance!
 - Research shows that when people feel forced between two bad options, they don't seek better alternatives.
 - But honesty and strong relationships are not opposites!

SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ...

AVOID:

Problems escalate
More folks involved
Costs time, money,
resources
Potential for legal
complications

TAKE ACTION:

Increase productivity
People feel valued
Improve working
relationships
Increases confidence
and reputation

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“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

– George Bernard Shaw

HOW TO BE HONEST WITHOUT HURTING RELATIONSHIPS

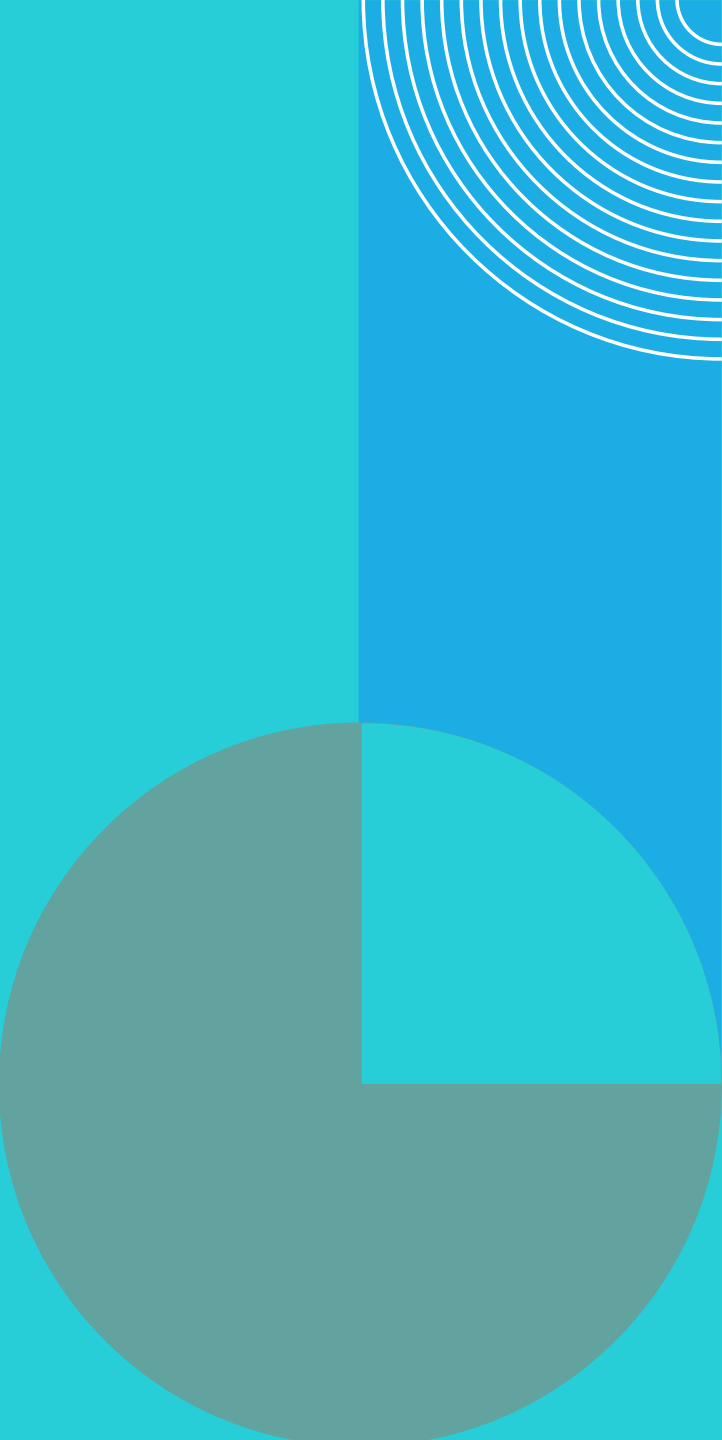
- The **Fool's Choice** is just that, a false choice.
- You don't have to pick between honesty and relationships. **You can do both** by communicating with clarity, respect, and empathy.
- The best teams and leaders aren't those who avoid difficult conversations, but those who navigate them **with honesty and care.**



HOW TO BE HONEST WITHOUT HURTING RELATIONSHIPS

16

- Reframe your perspective
 - View honesty and relationships as complimentary
- Balance candor with care
 - Specificity
 - “I” statements
 - Assume positive intent
- Listen as much as you speak
 - Seek to understand



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

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*“Honesty is the best
policy.”*

– Benjamin Franklin

1. NO SURPRISES

Let the other person know the purpose for meeting from the outset

- Don't blindside people with “coffee and a chat”
- Be upfront about the meeting purpose, to give them time to prepare

2. CHOOSE THE ENVIRONMENT

Is your office the best place?

- Is it intimidating?

Is a public space the best place?

- Is it too open for others to hear?

Recommendation: a private meeting room, booked in advance, with water and tissues

3. TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Address issues early

- “I saw you missed the last two deadlines; let’s get together in an hour and work through this.”
- Don’t schedule later in the week
- Leaders leverage timely feedback to drive improved performance, not to punish

4. SAVE THE SMALL TALK

Lay things out and remain compassionate

- Recognize anxiety
- Don't rush their response or understanding; this takes time
- You have had more time to consider
- Let them ask questions
- Keep it constructive

5. CHECK YOURSELF

Make certain YOUR mindframe is good

- Acknowledge your emotions
- Sarcasm, defensiveness, anger have no place here
- Allow the other person to work through the issues but do not respond in kind
- Allow them to keep respect and dignity, but not to derail the meeting

6. FOLLOW UP

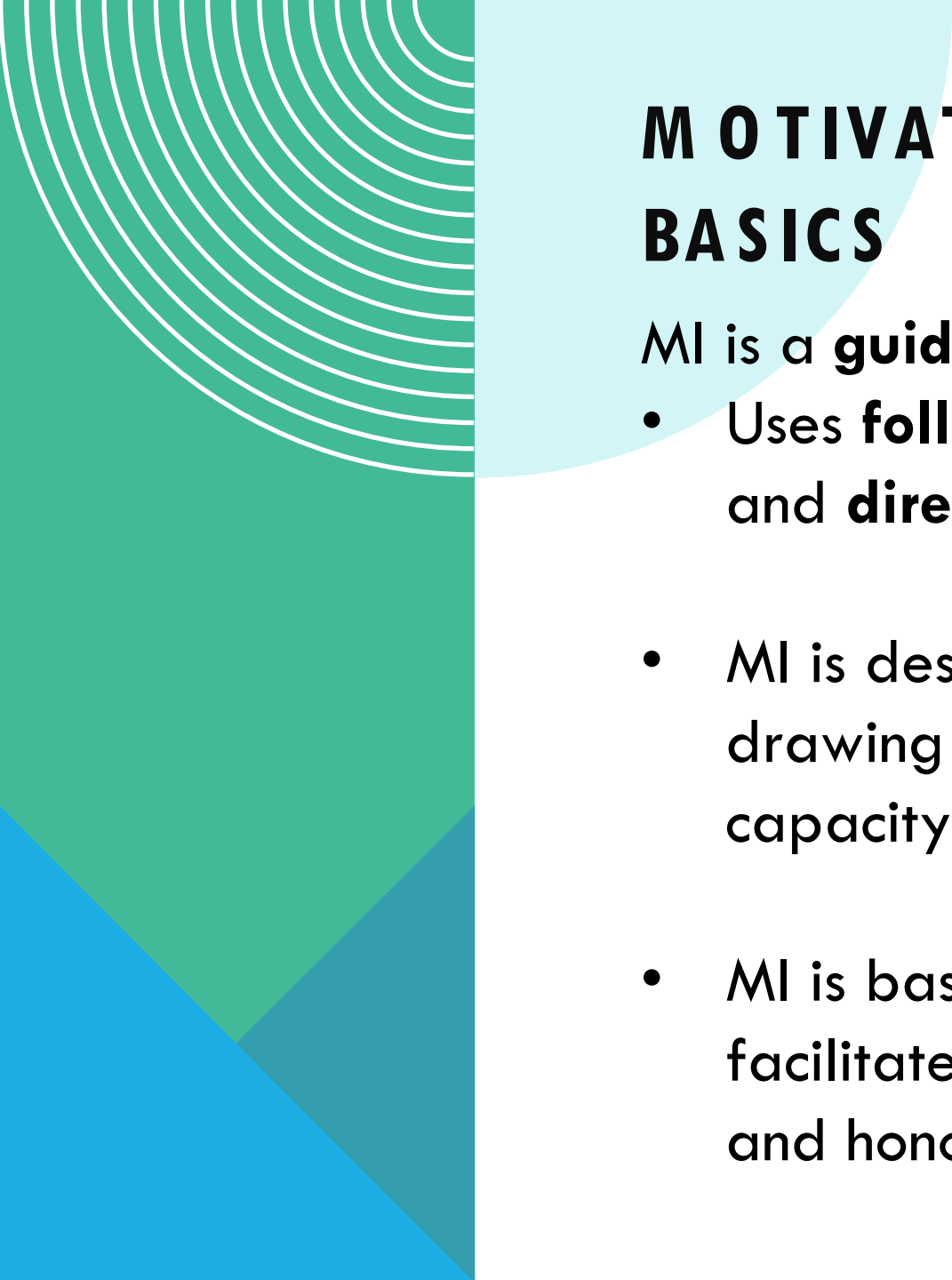
Keep in touch

- If there needs to be a follow up conversation, make certain it occurs
- Check in on their welfare
- If they need to provide anything to you, ensure you get it, and vice versa
- Do not intentionally avoid the person

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“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”

-Ernest Hemingway



MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)⁶ BASICS

MI is a **guiding** style of communication

- Uses **following** (good listening) and **directing** (giving information)
- MI is designed to **empower** people to change by drawing out their own meaning, importance and capacity for change
- MI is based on being **respectful** and **curious** that facilitates the natural internal processes of change and honors client autonomy

WHEN IS MI USEFUL?

High Ambivalence

- Stuck, or have mixed feelings about change

Low Confidence

- Doubting their abilities to change

Low Desire to Change

- Uncertainty about wanting to make a change

Low Importance

- Benefits of change and disadvantages of the current situation are unclear

OARS: TOOLS IN THE TOOLBOX

Open-ended questions

- Explores perspectives, ideas, and experiences

Affirmations

- Recognizing strengths that lead to change, even if they're small

Reflective Listening

- Stating back what you've heard; paraphrasing

Summaries

- Longer reflections of multiple statements

FINAL THOUGHTS

Fear is normal

- ...but inaction is not a solution

Think through making this a positive, constructive experience

- ...and your role in it!

Remember the end goal

- Better outcomes, better productivity, better working relationships

Books to consider:

Crucial Conversations, by Grenny, Patterson, et.al., 3rd edition

The Seven Things Your Team Needs To Hear You Say, by Dye

The Coaching Habit, by Bungay Stanier

The Compass Within, by Glazier

The Heart of Laser-Focused Coaching, by Franklin

Motivational Interviewing, by Miller and Rollnick



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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