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**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS- How to discuss what matters most**

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SLIDE ONE

My training today comes from the book called “Difficult Conversations” which was written by the team that led the Harvard negotiation project.

Of course I'm going to apply these principles to your Arbonne business, but they apply to every area of your life.

SLIDE TWO- HOW DO WE GET TO THE NEXT LEVEL

We all want to learn how to take our business to the next level. Why do I feel that learning how to have a Difficult Conversation will help you grow your business?

SLIDE THREE- ITS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Arbonne is a relationship business. The opportunities are people opportunities and the problems are people problems. As an Area manager you now have a team full of people.

SLIDE FOUR- RELATIONSHIPS ARE MADE UP OF CONVERSATIONS

The quality of your relationships will affect the strength of your business, and relationships are built one conversation at a time. And good conversations are all about the quality of the questions you ask.

None of us have problems with the easy conversations, but I am here today to talk to you about a strategy for learning how to have the difficult conversations. Like any other leadership skill, there is a structure to these conversations and a strategy that we can all learn.

SLIDE FIVE

WHAT IS A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION?

Anytime we feel vulnerable or our self-esteem is implicated, when we care deeply about what is being discussed or about the people with whom we are discussing it, there is potential for us to experience the conversation as difficult. We all have conversations that we dread and find unpleasant that we avoid or face up to like bad medicine.…

I know that already some of you are thinking\_ Ugh- I don’t have time for Difficult Conversations. Well I have news for you.

Unresolved conflict in our work and personal relationships suck energy and attention in sneaky ways that we often don't take account of. We should be adding up the time we spend fuming to ourselves, venting to colleagues and spouses, lying awake thinking about what we should have said to them, and looking up their personality disorders on the Internet to bolster our case.

SLIDE SIX- HAND GRENADE

 Delivering a difficult message is like throwing hand grenade. Coated with sugar, thrown hard or soft, a hand grenade is still going to do damage. And keeping it to yourself is no better. Choosing not to deliver a difficult message is like hanging onto the hand grenade once you've pulled the pin. So we feel stuck.

The author’s intention is to get us out of the hand grenade business altogether, by getting us out of the damaging battle of delivering and receiving messages.

They want us to learn to spend seven minutes now , so we can save seven hours later.

SLIDE SEVEN- MESSAGE DELIVERY STANCE

So what do I mean by the message delivery **stance?** We have something to say, we are sure we are right about it, and we are there to just present the facts and win the point.

Nothing could be further from the truth, or less helpful to the conflict we are trying to resolve.

So the authors explain to us something that is called The Learning conversation.

SLIDE EIGHT THE LEARNING CONVERSATION

Even if you think your issue to solve is unique, all difficult conversations share a common structure. The Learning Conversation is all about trying to understand what happened from the OTHER person’s point of view.

SLIDE NINE THREE CONVERSATIONS

The authors believe that Each difficult conversation is really three conversations.

And we need to be aware of each conversation, and learn how to manage them with appropriate questions and responses.

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The first conversation is the “ What happened “conversation.

SLIDE ELEVEN

The second is the “Feelings” conversation.

SLIDE TWELVE

And the third is the “Identity “conversation.

Let me explain each one in a little bit of greater detail.

As I am going through each of them, I want you to think about a time when you had a situation that involved a Difficult Conversation in your business.

Here are some examples of DCs that could come up in the Arbonne world.

1) You have a friend or family member who you feel is being unsupportive and critical of you in front of others

2) You want to share concerns with your upline about the way the team meetings are being run

3) You want to discuss with someone in your downline about the impact of her constantly being late or cancelling your training sessions.

4) You need to talk to another IC about your belief that she was “poaching” one of your prospects

Raise your hand if you would rather get a bikini wax than have to engage in any of these conversations?

I get it!

But if we don’t learn to deal with stuff like this, the pain it causes us may lead to a crack in our belief, or our desire **to do Arbonne.** But the good news is- getting the skills to engage in these conversations and have a satisfying outcome is possible!

So let’s talk about how any of these topics, or anything else- Is not one but three conversations

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#1 The "What happened?" Conversation.

Most difficult conversations involve disagreement about what happened or what should happen. Who said what and who did what?

In the What Happened Conversation- the **goal in the Learning Conversation is to s**top arguing about who is right- and to learn to explore each other’s stories.

**SLIDE 14**

**Three Fronts**

When we are trying to figure out what happened- there are three fronts

* Truth
* Intentions
* Blame

And the most common problem is that we make assumptions on each front that just aren’t true.

One of my favorite punch lines comes from the t.v. show the Odd Couple . It is “When you assume- you make an ass out of you and me”.

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**The Truth Assumption**

As we argue vociferously for our view we often fail to question one crucial assumption upon which our whole stance in the conversation is built: ” I am right, and you are wrong.” This simple assumption causes endless grief.

 What am I right about? I am right that you don't support me. I am right that you are unable to mentor new people. I am right that your comments at our last meeting were inappropriate.… The number of things I am right about would fill a book. There's only one hitch: I am not right. How could this be ? It seems impossible . Surely I must be right sometimes!

Well, no. The point is this: Difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right. They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values. They are not about what is *true*, they are about what is *importan*t.

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SHIFT FROM CERTAINTY TO CURIOSITY

The quest to determine who is right and who is wrong is a dead end.

So the way around that is to shift from CERTAINTY – to CURIOSITY

I am going to read the Certainty Statement- and please reply out loud to me the Curiosity Statement in Blue.

* Shift From: How can they think that?
* To: I wonder what information they have that I don’t.
* Shift From: How can they be so irrational?
* To: How might they see the world such that their view makes sense?
* **And a great question: What don’t I know about myself that the other knows?**
* **If you are truly interested in personal growth, this last question might give you some fascinating information?**

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THE AND STANCE

Learning to develop something called the “ And “ Stance- is important.

It means we transcend and include **both** your story and the other’s story.

* But just because you understand their story doesn’t mean you have to agree with it.

But you have to accept the complexity that both stories have different information and different interpretations, thus both make sense at the same time.

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**The Intention Assumption**

**Ok lets talk about the Intention Assumption.**

The second argument in the "What happened?" Conversation is over intentions – yours and mine. Did you yell at me to hurt my feelings or merely to emphasize your point? Did you throw my candy bar out because you're trying to control my behaviour or because you want to help me live up to my commitment to follow the 30 Days to Healthy Living Program?

Don’t make the mistake that just because there was a very real impact to you, it was their INTENTION to cause you that impact.

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We make two common mistaken assumptions about Intention.

* #1 - Our assumptions about intentions are often wrong or incomplete
* SLIDE 20
* #2 – Good intentions don’t sanitize bad impact
* That means Even if one party had the best of intentions, it doesn’t mean there was no impact to the other party.

The truth is, intentions are invisible. We assume them from other people's behavior. In other words, we make them up. But invented stories about other people's intentions are actually usually inaccurate Why? Because people's intentions, like so much else in difficult conversations, are complex . Sometimes people act with mixed intentions , sometimes they act with no intention, or at least not related to us. And sometimes they act on good intentions that nonetheless hurt us.

Because our view of others intentions (and their view of ours ) are so important in difficult conversations, leaping to unfounded assumptions can be a disaster.

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So how can we disentangle Impact from Intent?

Why do we go from

 “I was hurt” to “You intended to hurt me.”

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Here are the questions to ask to ask.

* Ask: “What did the other person actually say or do?”
* Impact: “What was the impact of this on me?”
* Check your Assumption:
* Say it with me
* “What assumptions am I making about what the other person intended?

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**The Blame Assumption**

The third error we make in the “What Happened “conversation has to do with blame. But seeking to assign blame is NOT productive.

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Here is why.

* Blame is about judging and looks backward.
* “

it creates disagreement, denial, and little learning.

When competent, sensible people do something stupid, the smartest move is trying to figure out, first, what kept them from seeing it coming and, second, how to prevent the problem from happening again.

Talking about blame distracts us from exploring *why* things went wrong and *how* we might correct them going forward. Focusing instead on understanding the contribution system allows us to learn about the real causes of the problem, and to work on correcting them. The distinction between blame and contribution may seem subtle. But it is a distinction worth working to understand, because it will make a significant difference in your ability to handle difficult conversations.

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MAKE THE SHIFT

So we need to move away from assigning blame, and make the shift to –

Say it with me please: Understanding Contribution.

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Contribution is about understanding, and looks forward

* Questions to be answered:
* Say it with me please:
* How have we each contributed to this situation?
* Having identified the contribution system,
* how can we change it?
* What can we do to move forward?
* The idea is that each person explores any way, that they may have contributed to a problem arising.
* It may surprise you what kinds of behaviour can contribute to a problem.
* To Find your fair share: Here are three hard to spot contributions

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1.

Avoiding the problem until now

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2.

 Being unapproachable

Uninterested, unpredictable, short-tempered, judgmental, punitive, hypersensitive, argumentative, or unfriendly

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3.

Intersections

Which means understanding Differences between two people in background, preferences, communication style, or assumptions about  relationships

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To move from Blame to Contribution

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You can begin to Map the Contributions system by looking for the contributions you've **each** made to create the problem.
So here are the questions to ask:

Please say them with me:

What are they contributing? What am I contributing?

Who else is involved?

Remember to Take responsibility for your contribution early

And Help them understand their contribution

Clarify what you would have them do differently

•Identify what you each need to do to influence and improve the situation.

 Identify how the change they make would help facilitate the changes you need to make

I just want to add that one of the things that impresses me most about Home Office Communication is that they always, early in communication about problems, take responsibility for their contribution and acknowledge the impact to the field. That is Excellent Leadership !!

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**OK lets move on to the The Feelings Conversation**: what should we do with our emotions?

Difficult conversations do not just involve feelings, they are at their very core about feelings. But Engaging in a difficult conversation without talking about feelings is like staging an opera without the music.

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* If unaddressed, feelings will either ‘leak out’ or ‘burst out.’
* Unexpressed feelings lead to disengagement from the conversation.

Say this with me:

*
* Most of us, Can do a better job in the feelings conversation than we are now. It may not seem like it, but talking about feelings is a skill that can be learned.

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* Hardest/most important communication tasks are
* Say it with me:
* describing feelings & listening.
* Good listening requires :
* 1) an open and honest curiosity about the other person.
* 2) A willingness and ability to keep the focus on the other person.

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 The danger in the feelings conversation , is that after we sort out what our feelings are, we need to

* Share our actual feelings, not attributions or judgments about the other person.
* Say it with me:
* Be aware that feelings transform themselves into judgments, accusations and attributions.

SLIDE 38 ACKNOWLDEGEMENT

* Feelings need to be heard and acknowledged before you can sort through them, by both parties.
* Say it with me:
* Acknowledgment cannot be skipped!!!!

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* What acknowledgment means is:
* letting the other person know that what they have said has made an impression on you.
* And letting them know:
* And Say it with me:
* Your feelings matter to me.

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**And finally-**

**The identity conversation**

Of the three conversations, the identity conversation may be the most subtle and the most challenging. The identity conversation looks inward: it's all about who we are and how we see ourselves. How does what happened affect **my self-esteem, my self image, my sense of who I am in the world?**

In short: the identity conversation is about what I am saying to myself about me.

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* It is important to Ground Your Identity: Ask Yourself What’s at Stake

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It is important to ground your identity before having a difficult conversation ,and make sure that you are confident to the core that you can say to yourself:

* I am Competent
* I am a Good Person
* I am worthy of Love

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Identity Vulnerabilities

Our Core Identity can become vulnerable if we

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If Approach our Identity with an All or Nothing Syndrome

Which means we believe •I’m either:

• competent or incompetent

• good or bad

• worthy of love or not.

• If we adopt this stance we will be hypersensitive to feedback

* If we believe “If I’m not completely competent, then I’m completely incompetent.”

We will not be open to feedback

* Feedback does not define who we are.
* It is just information about a particular situation.
* The “All or Nothing” Syndrome creates an unstable identity.

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So we need to “Complexify”: our Identity

* (take an “And” Stance”with ourselves
* we are Human- and all Identity includes
* Say it with me
* good **and** bad behavior;
* noble **and** less noble intentions,
* wise **and** unwise choices.
* SLIDE 47
* We can only participate in a Learning Conversation if we can Accept these three things
* Say then with me
* I will make mistakes.
* My intentions are complex.
* I have contributed to the problem.
* SLIDE 48
* CREATE A LEARNING CONVERSATION
* I hope I have opened your eyes to the possibility that you can learn how to Create a Learning Conversation. Conflict is much better to be approached with curiosity, than with the intent to blame.
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* I encourage you to read or listen to the book DC to truly learn about the steps and strategies involved in handling the Three Conversations.
* My vision for us as a company and particularly for our Successline, is to be seen in the industry as the people who are the best listeners, the most respectful problem solver's, and as agents of change who help everyone we come in contact with feel better about themselves after speaking to us, then they did before.
* THE END