



# DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: A GUIDE FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED LEADERS

## RESOURCE BOOKLET

MIKHAEL BORNSTEIN, MA



# BOOKS AND PODCASTS

PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE LOTS OF GREAT RESOURCES OUT THERE. HERE ARE A FEW TO GET YOU STARTED.

## Five Books:

- *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler
- *Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity* by Kim Scott
- *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen
- *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen
- *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* by Patrick Lencioni

## Five Podcasts:

- *Think Fast, Talk Smart: Communication Techniques* hosted by Matt Abrahams
- *How Can I Say This...* Hosted by Blythe Musteric and Marc Musteric
- *Communicate to Motivate* Hosted by Jim Van Allan
- *Communicast* Hosted by Scott D'Amico
- *Toastcaster Communication Leadership Learning Lab* Hosted by Greg Gazin

## REVIEW

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Employee growth</b></li><li>• <b>We care about the employee</b></li><li>• <b>We care about the team</b></li></ul>
<b>Mindset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove filters</li><li>• Get curious</li><li>• Be supportive</li></ul>
<b>Setting the stage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where</li><li>• When</li><li>• How</li></ul>
<b>Having the conversation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set expectations</li><li>• “When ... I ...”</li><li>• Make it safe</li><li>• Deescalate</li><li>• Priming</li><li>• Move to action</li></ul>
<b>Follow-up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Document</li><li>• Check-in</li><li>• Praise</li></ul>

# SEVEN GOOD WAYS TO START THE CONVERSATION

- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.
- I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," be sure to follow up.
- I think we have different perceptions about \_\_\_\_\_. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.
- I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. I think we may have different ideas about how to \_\_\_\_\_.
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about \_\_\_\_\_. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

# RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

**R** = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

**E** = use EMPATHETIC listening.

**S** = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

**P** = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

**E** = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

**C** = keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

**T** = TRUST ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong.

# 6 TOOLS TO FACILITATE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

- **Make it Safe to Talk**
  - Embrace a mutual purpose.
  - Offer mutual respect.
- **Listen**
  - Seek first to understand and then to be understood
  - Ask open-ended questions. “Tell me more...” “Help me understand...”
- **Adopt the “Yes,And...” Stance**
  - Validate that both your view of the situation, and that of another person, have value and you do not have to choose which one is right.
- **Learn to Recognize your Stories to Separate Impact and Intent**
  - We tell ourselves stories when we add meaning to another’s behavior without checking if our conclusions are right.
  - To prevent yourself from leaping to assumptions about another’s intent, ask questions.
- **Use “I” Messages**
  - When ... I ... Can ...
- **Focus on Contribution, NOT Blame**
  - Contribution asks, “How did we each contribute to this problem or conflict that we are experiencing?”

# TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- A successful outcome will depend on two things: how you are and what you say. How you are (centered, supportive, curious, problem-solving) will greatly influence what you say.
- Acknowledge emotional energy—yours and your partner's—and direct it toward a useful purpose.
- Know and return to your purpose at difficult moments.
- Don't take verbal attacks personally. Help your partner come back to center.
- Don't assume your partner can see things from your point of view.
- Practice the conversation with a friend before holding the real one.
- Mentally practice the conversation. See various possibilities and visualize yourself handling them with ease. Envision the outcome you are hoping for.

# 7 MORE TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Have a goal in mind.
- Use a non-blaming communication style.
  - “When ... I ... Can ...
- Recognize that complex, interpersonal problems have complex, interpersonal causes.
- Accept criticism if it's on-topic.
- Phrase requests toward the positive.
- Don't feel the need for total victory.
- Don't forget to listen.





## **MIKHAEL BORNSTEIN, MA**

Having worked in the arts, health, social service, and education sectors, Mikhael Bornstein has more than twenty years of experience as a nonprofit leader. Mikhael is an AFP Master Trainer and a frequent speaker at conferences across North America. He teaches at George Brown College and Toronto Metropolitan University. Mikhael has a Master in Arts in Leadership Studies from Royal Roads University.

[MIKHAEL@THEPHILANTHROPICLEADER.COM](mailto:MIKHAEL@THEPHILANTHROPICLEADER.COM)

[WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/MIKHAELBORNSTEIN/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikhaelbornstein/)

[WWW.THEPHILANTHROPICLEADER.COM/NEWSLETTER](http://WWW.THEPHILANTHROPICLEADER.COM/NEWSLETTER)

