eBook

Speaking Up— How to do Difficult Dialogs

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Beyond Sales Tactics™

Difficult Dialogs

The purpose of this eBook is to help you learn how to have difficult dialogs in a way that is humanizing, productive, empathetic, collaborative, and respectful. This topic is important because **Difficult Dialogs** are often unavoidable in life, yet they can be anxiety-inducing, and even damaging if not handled well. By learning how to have these discussions effectively, we can reduce stress and improve our relationships– personally and professionally.

Why are difficult dialogs hard?

The first step to improve our ability to speak up and have a difficult dialog is to identify the barriers that stand in our way, some of which may be self-limiting beliefs.

There are numerous reasons why one may be hesitant or fearful to speak up, including some common **'self-doubt downers'.**

Fear of conflict is a very common self-doubt downer. Many times, this fear stems from **lack of confidence in the ability to effectively communicate** your needs or desires; **not knowing what to say or how to say it**.

You may have **very little trust or self-trust that speaking up will have any influence.**

This can lead to **feeling defeated that speaking up will not matter or have negative consequences** before the conversation has even happened. As with the thoughts, "I don't want to get fired" or "be seen as a troublemaker".

If you tend to be a people pleaser and do **not want to upset people, disrupt the situation, or worry about hurting other's feelings,** self-doubt is a downer you may struggle with.

Of course, it can also **manifest as a sense of deference to leaders with higher titles or authority.** That said, the higher the level you aspire to go in your career the more mastering the art of having hard conversations will be beneficial.

Many of us have the desire to fit in and be accepted. It is important to balance the desire to speak up with desire to be accepted.

It’s normal to feel anxious about these dialogs. With preparation, purpose, and practice you can discover strategies to make these conversations easier.

Delivering Difficult Dialogs Diligently

These are some general principles for having difficult discussions:

- stay calm,
- use active listening skills,
- and seek to understand the other person's perspective.

When you deliver your message, your feelings, and your needs, remember to use the 3 P's:

- **Pause** – let your message digest
- **Ponder**– wonder about… "What is the other person thinking? What is their perspective?"
- **Prompt**– ask for their thoughts, "What are you thinking? What is your perspective? What am I missing?"

Apply in Practice- 3 Tips

1. **Use "I" statements to express your own feelings. No one can argue with your experience!**

2. **Ask open-ended questions.**
   (Use what, when, where, how, & sometimes why questions.)

3. **Paraphrase what the other person is saying to ensure you understand their perspective.**

It is understandable that during particularly sensitive situations and issues your emotions may cause you to want to respond with strong reactions. Hold on a minute, pause before responding. And whatever you do, do not email or text when your emotions are running high or hot. It never turns out well. Calm down and then prompt for the other's perspective. You will be glad you did!

WHEN YOU HEAR YOURSELF SAYING OR THINKING, "I CAN'T" OR "I AM NOT GOOD AT..." ADD THE POWER OF YET.

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Handling Emotions When Triggered Small “t” or Big “T”

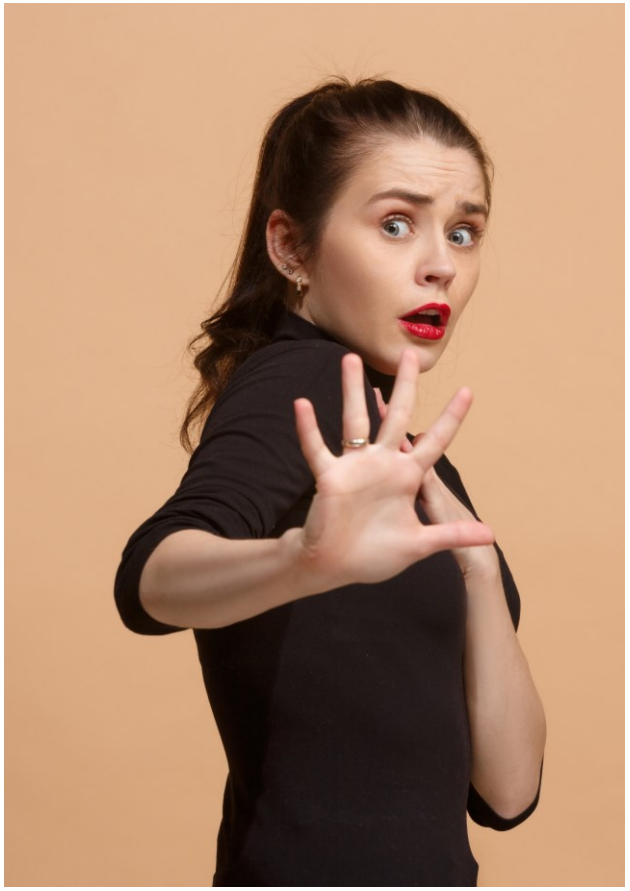
Difficult dialogs can be emotional, inciting an Amygdala Hijack. According to Daniel Goleman, **an Amygdala Hijack is an emotional response at the moment of contact that is overwhelming, out of measure with the stimulus that caused it, likely to lead to a later regret, acts as your internal alarm/smoke detector, and is a survival mechanism.**

“An emotional trigger is anything–including memories, experiences or events–that sparks a strong emotional reaction, regardless of your current mood,” said Crystal Raypole, author of the article “How to Identify and Manage your Emotional Triggers, Nov. 13, 2020 and reviewed by Jennifer Litner, PhD, LMFT, CST.

Depending on the situation and context around your triggers, you may want to seek the help of a mental health counselor or therapist to learn to deal with them effectively.

Strategies for Handling Strong Emotions When it is Least Convenient

- **Face your Feelings**. Ignore them and they are likely to get louder and more intense.



- **First notice when strong emotions or big reactions occur.** Over time you might discover patterns and situations that evoke your emotions. This information gives you an opportunity to anticipate how you choose to respond in advance.
- **Name it to claim it.** Identify the feelings and approach them with appreciation for they are trying to tell you something.
- **Take a break to calm down.** Select a symbol, tool, or reminder to help you to remember to calm down. Use breathing exercises, meditations, and mindfulness practices help during these times.

EMAIL IS EVIL WHEN YOU ARE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AN AMYGDALA HIJACK.

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Calm Down Cup

Case in point, my daughter gives my granddaughter a ‘calm down cup’. Maybe we need to make this available in companies and organizations?

Acknowledge your feelings and the other person's feelings. Use empathy to show you understand where they're coming from.

Practice Mindfulness or Use Breathing Techniques

1. Practice meditation / deep breathing to calm your nervous system
2. Manage your story
3. Do cognitively undemanding tasks (cleaning, gardening, or reading to relax)
4. Take a walk in nature
5. Play with puzzles https://puzzlegarage.com
6. Call a friend, coach, or therapist
7. Sleep on it!
8. Add your own

When to Speak Up

Practice and refine your speaking up skills in situations with low risk. This will prepare you for difficult dialogs in a variety of scenarios. Some examples that are prime to prep for are when you:

- **Are a leader, emerging leader, job seeker, boss or partner**
- **Want or need to negotiate a salary:** When starting a new job or asking for a raise, it's important to speak up and advocate for yourself to ensure that you're being compensated commensurate to your skills, responsibilities, and experience. These ‘speaking up’ skills work at home too.
- **Disagree or have a difference of opinion:** When you notice others’ behaviors, actions, or words cause concern, or when you experience frustration that gets in the way of collaboration or teamwork, ask for feedback. If you want to grow and develop in your career, it's important to speak up and ask for feedback from your employer and colleagues.

- **Find a solution, a better way, or are compelled to advocate for yourself:** If you have an idea or project that you believe in, speak up, and promote your rationale to ensure that your innovation gets the attention and resources needed to succeed.
- **Encounter sensitive topics, workplace violations, or addressing issues:** If you're experiencing harassment, discrimination, or other workplace issues, take proactive measures to safeguard that your rights are being protected.
- **Identify performance issues, credit for work, setting boundaries:** It's important to speak up when you're feeling overwhelmed or overworked to protect your well-being and make sure you're not taking on more than you can handle. Or perhaps you are like one of my clients who spoke up when peers were taking credit for their work.
- **Have something to say – for example, requesting time off:** If you need to take time off for personal or medical reasons, it is essential to speak up and make your request known to your employer/boss/HR.

There are many more reasons to speak up in professional and personal settings. When you feel a conversation is needed, there probably is one needed. Listen to your intuition, demonstrate managerial courage, and speak up.

How to Approach Difficult Dialogs

1. **Prepare beforehand**
2. **Use empathetic, partnering, and collaborative language**
3. **Employ communication strategies**

These are all valuable tips to incorporate when having a tough dialog with someone. To go further, we are including my communication set up strategies as well as a script adapted from “Non-Violent Communication, Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD” that can help you feel confident in moving forward with your conversation.

Communication Strategy Set Up:

Speaking up starts with a difficult dialog with yourself

1. **Schedule time to talk — catch the person's attention**
2. **Set high-level context — why, topic, situation**
3. **Ask permission: "May we talk about…?" or "Is this a good time to talk about…?"**
4. **Determine desired outcome: "At the end, my hope is that we…"**
   Speak in terms of the relationship, not the issue.
5. **Avoid "False Feeling" words**

Communication Strategy Script

When (I notice) _____ *(describe action / behavior / observation / issue without the word "you" to avoid blaming)*

I feel _____ *(share feeling)*

because I have a need for _____ *(state need / want / what matters/ value)*.

Pause. Ponder. Prompt for their Perspective.

Would you consider _____? *(Make request, not a demand.)*

This set up and script can be very helpful when planning for a difficult dialog. Prepare using this script in private then practice with a trusted friend or colleague. This will help you be ready and have confidence in your ability to express your thoughts and feelings honestly and accurately.

Speaking of that, to be effective remember to share your feelings, not judgements. Judgements and opinionated words often evoke defensive responses and are a communication barrier. Here are some examples of false feelings, which are actually judgements.

Abandoned	Cheated	Ignored	Neglected	Unwanted
Abused	Coerced	Intimidated	Put down	Used
Attached	Criticized	Insulted	Rejected	Violated
Betrayed	Dismissed	Let down	Unappreciated	Wronged
Blamed	Disrespected	Manipulated	Unheard	
Bullied	Excluded	Misunderstood	Unloved	

-Adapted from Dr. Jenn Moore, Moore Well-being

Avoid Blame/Opinionated Words: I feel...***like, that, as*** | When...**you, they pronouns**

Avoid Absolute Words: You...***always, never***

Conclusion

SPEAK UP

Rehearse having difficult dialogs in your daily life and remember that it's a skill that can be developed with practice and patience.

I hope this helps you prepare, ponder, prompt, and practice how to successfully **Speak Up** and how to **Do a Difficult Dialog**.

Free Resources

Take your understanding of Speaking Up and Doing Difficult Dialogs to the next level.

Learn More

Host A Workshop/ Training Event

Enhance your team's communication. Invite Barb to facilitate a workshop or development program.

Contact Us

Executive/Leadership Coaching

Learn more about how Beyond Sales Tactics & Barb Girson can support you, your team, & your organization.

Schedule

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