

Synopsis for “Preparing for a Difficult Conversation with Self-Video

Instructions for exercise:

Think of someone you are having a conflict with. Think about what they have said or done that has caused you some distress.

Think about what you want to say to them. You might write this down. You will record yourself twice. This 1st time you will make no attempt to be nice or polite. Say whatever you want. Name-calling, swearing, yelling... whatever you need to express to get your feelings out. Record yourself expressing this.

Take a break and come back and watch your recording. Imagine you are the other person watching and listening to what you have said. What do you imagine they would think and feel? How might they respond if they actually heard it? You might pretend to be them and say what you imagine they would say.

Take another break and come back. This time you will prepare to be more thoughtful, which means no swearing, name-calling, etc. Follow the 4 steps of Non-violent communication:

1. Observation
2. Feeling
3. Need
4. Request

Think about each of these steps before you record yourself again. You might write things down, but don't read it as a script when you record. You can refer to your notes but try to be spontaneous.

First, share what you have observed in the other person's behaviour or speech that you are unhappy about. This should be objective and

concrete. If it is something they said, try to quote them precisely. They should be able to agree with what you say.

Second, share how you felt when they did or said what you shared above. Identify the emotion, i.e. mad, sad, afraid, etc. Don't say things like, "I feel like you don't care" or "I feel like I can't trust you". These are judgments, not emotions.

Third, identify the need you have that wasn't met by the other person. Think of universal human needs, something everyone needs. Like safety, privacy, respect, affection, inclusion, information, etc. Avoid saying, "You made me feel...". They may have triggered your feeling, but it was your unmet need that caused it.

Lastly, make a request. Not a demand or an ultimatum. What could they do to meet your need? Be precise and concrete. "Be nicer", is too vague.

Once you have thought this through and perhaps written things down, record yourself as you imagine you are telling the message of each of the 4 steps to the other person.

When done recording, take another break. Come back and watch what you have recorded. Again, imagine you are the other person. How do you think they will receive your message? Pay attention to your word choice, your voice, your facial expressions and how you are in your body. Is there anything you might want to adjust? Make a note of that.

If you feel it could be helpful, record yourself again, making the adjustments you think would improve your presentation.

The point isn't to go out of your way and dilute what you need to say in the name of politeness. The point is to be as clear and strong as

possible, while optimizing the likelihood that the other person will hear you and respond constructively.