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## TODAY'S AGENDA

### I. Introduction and Hello

### II. Can We Talk? Managing Difficult Conversations

- A. Difficult Conversations Toolbox
- B. Step by Step Guide to Difficult Conversations
- C. When Things Go Sideways
- D. Take Action!

### III. Dealing with Difficult People: Working with You is Killing Me

- A. Identify A Difficult Person
- B. Facts about Difficult People/4 Responses
- C. The Dimensions of Human Behavior
  - D. Behavior Changing Toolbox
  - E. Dealing with Specific Types
  - F. Action Plan

### IV. Laugh a Bit



MORE RESOURCES

# DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT

**WHO...**

do I need to talk with?

**WHY...**

is this conversation necessary?

**WHAT...**

is the desired outcome of this conversation?

**HOW...**

do power dynamics impact this conversation?

**WHERE  
& WHEN..**

will this conversation take place?

**WHAT...**

will be your opening line?

# LEARNING CONVERSATION SUMMARY

## MUTUALLY AGREED UPON SOLUTION

| ACTION STEPS | BY WHOM | BY WHEN |
|--------------|---------|---------|
|              |         |         |
|              |         |         |
|              |         |         |
|              |         |         |

## FOLLOW UP CONVERSATION PLANS

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Beare, K. (2019). *Difficult Conversations. The Art and Science of Working Together*. Pop the Bubble Press.

Cloud, H. & Townsend, J. (2015). *How to Have Difficult Conversations. Gaining Skills for Honest and Meaningful Conversations*.

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations. How to Discuss What Matters Most*.

Robertson, S. (2019). *I Used to Have a Handle on Life, But it Broke: A Light-Hearted Guide to Serious Stress Management*. [www.dynamic-resources.net](http://www.dynamic-resources.net)

(Information on Dealing with Difficult People and General Stress Management)

### KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- 1) Adjust Your Mindset (Difficult Conversations become Learning Conversations)
- 2) Preserve the Relationship
- 3) Listen Authentically
- 4) Tell Your Story
- 5) Brainstorm Collaborative Solutions
- 6) Identify next steps and timeline

Can We Talk?

**Managing Difficult Conversations**

Shari Robertson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

1

Today we will:

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the desired outcome of a difficult conversation
- Discuss the steps in initiating and managing difficult conversations
- Develop an action plan to manage difficult conversations in your professional setting

2

**Final Report  
Knowledge, Skills and  
Training Consideration  
for Individuals Serving  
as Supervisors**  
ASHA, 2013



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

3

**Goal: "... guide and support the learner through hands-on clinical training with the goal of developing clinical and professional knowledge and skills."**

- Engagement in difficult conversations, when appropriate, regarding supervisee performance
- Develop supportive and trusting relationship with supervisee
- Create an environment that fosters learning and exploration of personal strengths and need

4



**Difficult conversation are difficult!**

And inevitable

5

**Part A: Your Toolbox**



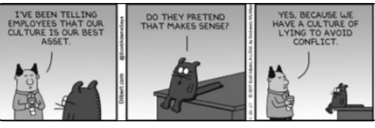
- ✓ Do It Now
- ✓ Adopt a Mindset of Inquiry
- ✓ Assume Your Assumptions are Wrong
- ✓ Preserve the Relationship
- ✓ Don't Play the Blame Game

6

**How we play the avoidance game**

- Don't speak up when someone has trampled on your professional or personal self esteem
- Allow others to take advantage of you
- Rationalize those who are behaving badly
- Think it's someone else's job
- Convince ourselves that it will get better on its own (it won't)

7



**Avoidance of a difficult task or conversation is a really bad strategy (especially true for supervisors)**

8

And now that little problem...

**Has become a BIG problem.**



9

**It's Getting BIGGER....** 

- O "Temperature" is raised – you likely get angrier and less able to manage the conversation
- O Workplace/Relationship has become more toxic
- O Other person has continued problematic behavior unchecked.
- O Your stress levels go through the roof.

10

Increasing your skill in managing difficult conversations can help you stop procrastinating about engaging in them!



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**#2**  
**Adopt a Mindset of Inquiry**

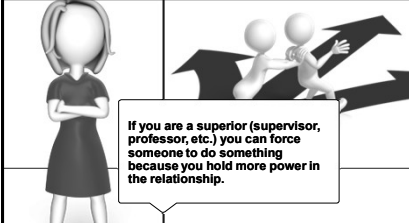


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You can't force others to change by insisting that they change



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If you are a superior (supervisor, professor, etc.) you can force someone to do something because you hold more power in the relationship.

14

But this is merely a short-term solution that makes YOU feel better



- It does not solve a problem or help a student (or colleague) move toward less self-destructive or professionally inappropriate behavior.
- Does not result in lasting change

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Those with more power (leaders/supervisors) have a responsibility to model positive conflict management skills!



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**Learning Conversations**



 Reframing Difficult Conversations

17



Learning Conversations

Difficult Conversations become Learning Conversations when we seek to find out the other person's story and perspective rather than simple changing their behavior.

18



Learning Conversations

Frame your conversation as your opportunity to move from certainty to curiosity.

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Move from a "Change Conversation" to a "Learning Conversation"

- Engaging in a conversation to learn, listen, and understand often DOES result in change
- People are more likely to change when they feel heard and respected.

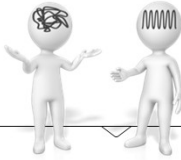
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**Bottom Line**

People are more likely to change when they are free not to.

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**#3 Assume Your Assumptions are Wrong**



22

**Intentions are Complex**

We often make the mistake of assuming we know the other person's intentions based on the IMPACT of their behavior on us.



(Because we interpret their behaviors through the lens of our own intentions)

23

| Aware of                     | Unaware of                    |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| My intentions                | Other person's intentions     |
| Others person's impact on me | My impact on the other person |

24

A Learning Conversation helps us discover the other person's story and uncover their true intentions.



25

Now, we can move forward to solve the problem rather than wasting our time laying blame, proving we are right, or basking in our own smug self-righteousness



26

**#4 Preserve the Relationship**



27

### Be mindful of the other person's dignity

- OPreserving the dignity of the other person isn't just "nice."
- OShaming, demeaning, or running roughshod over another person will not fix the problem.

28

but it will increase  
the odds that the  
relationship will be  
destroyed



29

The moment someone  
perceives disrespect, their  
behavior during the  
interaction becomes about  
defending their dignity.



30

### Suspend Judgment

Try to view the  
conversation as if you  
were a neutral third party.



31

### Suspend Judgment

You may be upset, angry,  
or disappointed but give  
them the space to change  
by suspending your  
judgment.



32

If you truly are  
investing in  
solving the  
problem.....



you need to accept that the other person's  
perception is their reality.

33

### #5 Don't Play the Blame Game



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### Ditch the Blame

Injures relationships  
and causes pain and  
anxiety.

Makes YOU feel better  
but destroys potential  
for future relationship  
and collaboration

Inhibits our ability to  
learn the real cause of  
the problem and/or to  
do anything meaning-  
ful to correct it!

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### Stop Arguing About Who is Right

It's a waste of time and  
doesn't accomplish ANYTHING  
useful except to damage the  
relationship.

OCreates a "winner" and a  
"loser"



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**Step 1:  
PREPARE**

37

**EVALUATE THE SITUATION**

- Think carefully about what is bothering you.
- Consider if your actions or behavior could be causing any of the conflict.

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**Plan Your Difficult (Learning) Conversation**

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

WHO...

WHY...

WHAT...

HOW...

WHERE & WHEN...

WHAT...

© Thomas Dill

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**WHO DO I NEED TO TALK WITH?**

OHINT: The answer is not "someone other than the person with whom I am in conflict."

O Writing down the person's name is the first step to helping you overcome avoidance

O (Now it's a plan!)

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

WHO...

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**BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF ON THE WHY**

OSometimes a perceived conflict is more about what's going on in your head, in your life, and inside you than what's going on between you and someone else.

O In this case, a conversation with someone else is not going to be productive

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

WHY...

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**WHAT IS THE DESIRED OUTCOME?**

O Next, search in yourself and determine what a successful outcome of this conversation would look like.

O How would a "successful" conversation end?

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

WHAT...

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**GOLD STANDARD of OUTCOMES**

**MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

"Preserve the Relationship"



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**HOW DO POWER DYNAMICS AFFECT THIS CONVERSATION?**

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

HOW...



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**HOW DO POWER DYNAMICS AFFECT THIS CONVERSATION?**

O Supervisor versus student/intern

O Chair versus faculty

O Administration versus faculty

O Academic faculty versus clinical faculty

O Students versus Faculty/instructors

O Staff versus Faculty

O Clients versus Student Clinicians

O Family members versus students

O Faculty versus family

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT**

HOW...



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### Acknowledge the power dynamic, but don't bow to it

- A Learning Conversation can be successful regardless of power dynamics.
- Acknowledge the power dynamics and modify plan as appropriate (more on this later).

HOW...

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### Be Aware of your "Power"



- If you are a supervisor, you need to realize you hold the vast majority of the power
- So, you need to be especially careful not to abuse this power...

HOW...

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### WHERE AND WHEN WILL THIS CONVERSATION TAKE PLACE

- Commit to a date that you will undertake this conversation and WRITE IT DOWN.
- If appropriate, consider inviting the other person to meet at a neutral location (Write this down, too).

WHERE & WHEN...

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### WHAT WILL BE YOUR OPENING LINE?

- Your Opening Line sets the tone for the rest of the conversation.
- The time you spend in developing a strong opening line substantially improves your chances that you will achieve your desired outcome.

WHAT...

49

### OPENING LINES ARE IMPORTANT!

- *"Your son can be very difficult. He is badly behaved and is undisciplined. You said he behaves well at home, but something must be going on."*
- *"I was very concerned by what you said in the IEP meeting. That was inappropriate and unprofessional."*
- *"You continue to ignore the comments I added to this IEP."*

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### The Implicit Message

What the other person "hears"

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Aware of My intentions       | Unaware of Other person's intentions |
| Others person's impact on me | My impact on the other person        |

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### Building an Effective Opening Statement

Operate from a Neutral Perspective

52

### Building an Effective Opening Statement



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### Opening Statements Reframed

*"I know you have been putting a lot of time into your reports. There are still some areas that need work. I think perhaps my written feedback wasn't clear enough. Perhaps it might be more efficient if we spent a little time talking about it together. Let's set aside 20 minutes after school either today or tomorrow so we can be sure you understand and can apply this when you are on your own."*

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State Topic

55

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56

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57

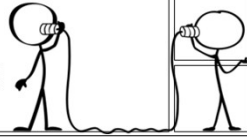
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State Topic

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### Step 2: ENGAGE



You have mapped out your strategy, not its time to execute your plan.

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### 3 Parts of a Learning Conversation

Learn Their Story

Express Your Feelings and Views

Problem Solve (Look to the Future)

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### Start with your well-rehearsed opening line...."

- Envision the conversation
- Take a deep breath
- Modulate your tone and expression to signal discussion not inquisition; exploration not punishment. (PRACTICE)
- PLUNGE

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### Then, Shut up....

AND LISTEN to their story



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### SHUT UP and LISTEN

- Use Active Listening...Authentically!
  - Establish eye contact
  - Maintain neutral positive expression
  - Employ minimal encouragers – don't interrupt
  - Be mindful of your non-verbals – and theirs
  - If necessary – occasional reflective statements\*\*
- Be comfortable with silence
- Be prepared for strong emotions

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**Tell Your Story**

Your Turn

But, only when they are finished telling theirs

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**Feelings Matter**

- Unexpressed feelings leak into difficult conversations.
- Your feelings will show themselves whether your consciously invite them to the party or not.
- Unexpressed feelings block the ability to listen – which requires an open and honest curiosity about the other person and willingness to keep the spotlight on them.
- Better to just say how you feel (without being a complete jerk about it) and move on

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**Revisiting Blame**



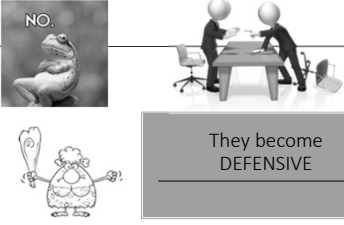
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**Don't play the Blame Game**

- Blame is about judging – looks backward "Who's to Blame?"
- When blame is the goal, understanding is the casualty
- Focusing on blame hinders problems solving
- When they are accused, they will do what accused people do....

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**NO.**



They become DEFENSIVE

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- Blame does not solve the problem

**IMPORTANT**



69

**Blame can leave a bad system or process in place and undiscovered**



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**PLUS it does NOT support a psychologically safe workplace!**

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**The Contribution Conversation**

The Alternative to the Blame Game



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### Shift to the Contribution Conversation

- O Goal is not to assign blame. Goal is to understand what happened so we can improve how we work together in the future.
- O How did we each contribute to the current situation?
  - O (How did we get ourselves into this mess?)
- O What do we do differently going forward
  - O (How do we get ourselves out of this mess?)

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### Invite a collaborative solution

- O Brainstorm options that meet each side's most important concerns and interests.
- O Create mutually agreed upon action steps
- O Insure that both parties leave the conversation knowing what will happen next
- O Establish a way to keep communication open to determine when steps are completed.

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Write it Down!



| LEARNING CONVERSATION SUMMARY |         |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|
| MUTUALLY AGREED UPON SOLUTION |         |         |
| ACTION STEPS                  | BY WHOM | BY WHEN |
|                               |         |         |
|                               |         |         |
|                               |         |         |
| FUTURE OF CONVERSATION PLANS  |         |         |
|                               |         |         |

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### Revisiting Power

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### Power Revisited

- O Although the basic tenets of managing difficult conversations is the same across conversations, power – real or perceived plays an important role
- O The various relationships that exist can be envisioned as a DOWN, UP, or NEUTRAL power balance.

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### Speaking "DOWN" the Power Hierarchy (re: to students, supervisees)

- O Be aware that your power may make the other person reticent to tell their story.
- O Important to monitor your tone, behavior, and words.
- O Don't fall prey to intimidation – even subtle. This destroys trust, damages the relationship, and sabotages any chance of a real collaborative solution to the problem.

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### Speaking "DOWN" the Power Hierarchy

- O TRUST is built by consistently respecting others and their viewpoints.
- O Commit to a true learning conversation!

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### NEUTRAL Conversations (colleagues)

- O Use your tools!
- O Listen!
- O Preserve the Relationship
- O Contribute to a trusting environment

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### Speaking "UP" the Hierarchy (Principals, Bosses, Supervisors)

- There is a difference between power and influence.
- Those "up" the Professional hierarchy may have more control over you, but you can still leverage influence.
- These individuals NEED to hear from you (help them build a more trusting environment)

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### Speaking "up" the Hierarchy

- Your opening line should follow the same rules as for any other difficult conversation (although you may have to pitch it to an intermediary).
- Once you are face to face, start by acknowledging their role as a decision maker (or other appropriate nod to their status)
  - *I understand that, as my supervisor, there are a lot of factors that you have to take into consideration, and I am on board with whatever you decide.*

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### Speaking "up" the Hierarchy

- Then, state your intent.
  - *"But I want to make sure that as you think about it, you are aware of XXX"*
- You have removed their need to defend, push back, or bristle about their authority so they can be more receptive of what you have to say.

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### Speaking "UP" the Hierarchy

- Now, state your case.
- Be crystal clear about what matters to you and why.
- DON'T ASSUME this person knows this if you haven't had the conversation.

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### Speaking "UP" the Hierarchy

- LISTENING AUTHENTICALLY has a lot of power in this situation – "persuasion power!"
- When people feel they are being heard (even those UP the chain) it's easier for them to hear *you*.
- You also learn what they care about.
- This may help you figure out what you may be missing or not understanding about the issue.

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### Speaking "UP" the Hierarchy

- Consider framing your conversation as seeking advice (that just happens to revolve around your concern)
- *"I want to talk about how to disagree in a meeting with colleagues. What's your advice?"*
- *"I know you have a lot of experience, so I am hoping you could share some advice about how to approach a difficult conversation with colleague."*

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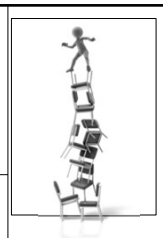
### Speaking "UP" the Hierarchy

- Expecting your "UP the Hierarchy" person to tell their story and have a discussion about joint contributions to the problem is probably not feasible – especially if the person is WAY up the chain and trust has not been established.
- But one can try. It may or may not persuade them, but if you haven't had the conversation then you can't complain about the outcome.
- *"Whining is not a substitute for action."*

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### Regaining Your Balance

If things start to go sideways...



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### Let go of Trying to Control their Reaction

- Don't measure success of a conversation based on whether or not the other person gets upset.



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|                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Let go of Trying to Control their Reaction</b></p>                                                                                                |  |
| <p>○Instead, give them space to be upset, take responsibility for any part you have in the problem, show compassion, work together to move forward.</p> |                                                                                   |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Reframe the conversation</b></p>                                                                                                                                                |  |
| <p>○Reframing is taking the essence of what the other person says and turning it back to the core of the conversation.<br/>○"I'm right, you're wrong. That's all there is to it."</p> |                                                                                   |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Use "yes, and..." statements</b></p>                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>○Validates your view of the situation and that of the other person.<br/><br/>○Allows you to work at understanding the other person's point of view without giving up your own.</p> |

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|                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Use "yes, and..." statements</b></p>                                                                                                                  |
| <p><i>"YES, I understand that you walked away from that meeting feeling disrespected and unheard AND I walked away feeling dismissed and confused."</i></p> |

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|                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Use "yes, and..." statements</b></p>                  |
| <p>○This allows you to move to the collaborative stage.</p> |

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|                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Use "yes, and..." statements</b></p>                                                    |
| <p><i>"Now that we understand each other, what's a good way to resolve this problem?"</i></p> |

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|                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Nullify Roadblocks ("thwarting behaviors")</b></p>                                                                                  |  |
| <p>○Be alert for behaviors that are designed to thwart the conversation.<br/>○Stonewalling, Playing the Victim, Blaming, Redirecting.</p> |                                                                                     |

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|                                                                                                                     |                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Nullify Roadblocks ("thwarting behaviors")</b></p>                                                            |  |
| <p>○Use Assertive communication – label the behavior, bring conversation back to the core of the topic at hand.</p> |                                                                                      |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Nullify Roadblocks ("thwarting behaviors")</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| <p>○"It's difficult for me to understand your point of view when you are trying to place the blame on someone else. Remember, our goal here is to make sure you have the skills you will need to be a professional SLP."</p> |                                                                                       |

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### Take a break

- If all else fails, excuse yourself to gather your composure or take a brief cognitive break.
- Re-schedule or schedule a second meeting if you feel depleted, bogged down, or there is too much to tackle in one meeting.



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### What if nothing works?

Sometimes you have to give yourself permission to give up.



101

### If you have truly tried everything (more than once)...

- You must then have a difficult conversation with yourself.
- Is this job (or marriage or friendship or relationship) worth the damage it is doing to me?
- What is the healthy choice for me (my family, my spouse)?
- "There is always a Plan B."

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### Learning Conversations Dos & Don'ts

Let's sum things up



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### Learning Conversations "Dos"



- Talk to the person with whom you are in conflict – not to someone else!
- Adjust your Mindset
- Preserve the Relationship/Build Trust

104

### Learning Conversations "Dos"



- Listen to Their Story
- Tell Your Story
- Brainstorm Collaborative Solutions
- Agree on next steps and timeline

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### Learning Conversations "Don't's"



- Avoid difficult conversations
- Play the power card
- Try to persuade, impress, trick, outwit, convert, or win over the other person.
- Violate trust relationships

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Templates, references, and suggested resources are available in the handouts

| DIFFICULT CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT |  | LEARNING CONVERSATION BLUEPRINT |  |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| NAME                             |  | NAME                            |  |
| DATE                             |  | DATE                            |  |
| TOPIC                            |  | TOPIC                           |  |
| GOALS                            |  | GOALS                           |  |
| PREPARED                         |  | PREPARED                        |  |
| COMPLETED                        |  | COMPLETED                       |  |

### TAKE ACTION!

Use the Tools and Conquer those Difficult Conversations!

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IDENTIFY A DIFFICULT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE!  
(PAST OR PRESENT)



What makes/made this person difficult? (Why do/did you think of them as a difficult person? What specific behaviors are/were demonstrated. Was this a single incident or long term issues?)

What negative impacts did/does this have on your life (personal and professional)



What did you/have you tried to attempt to manage this difficult person or relationship?



## I think my difficult person was/is:

TASK FOCUSED

(choose one)      Passive

Aggressive

**OR**

PEOPLE FOCUSED

(choose one)      Passive

Aggressive

## I think my difficult person's intent was/is:

To get things done

To get things done right

To get along

To get appreciated

## I need to consider changing my behavior in response to this difficult person (and others) in the following ways:

1. Dump the victim mentality
2. Doesn't it really matter if I'm right?
3. Learn to appreciate criticism
4. Conserve your energy
5. Use "I" rather than "You" language
6. Listen and Observe
7. Blend
8. Do not allowing yourself to be drawn into the difficult behavior
9. Stop rewarding difficult people for their behavior
10. Communicate Assertively and Effectively

# ACTION PLAN

My difficult person was/is a:

Bulldozer

Ticking Time Bomb

Know it All

Whiner

Hot Air Balloon

Wet Blanket

Sniper

Bully



My best choice/s to deal with this person is/are:

Stay and Do Nothing

Change My Attitude

Vote with My Feet

Change My Behavior



The specific strategies I will use are:

# Dealing with Difficult People: Working with YOU is Killing ME!

Shari Robertson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

ASHA Honors and Fellow



Most of us have had to deal with a DIFFICULT PERSON at some time in our lives.

## Facts about Dealing with Difficult People

- There is no magic wand....
- It's not about you – it's about THEM!
  - The behaviors difficult people exhibit are a reflection of their inner state.
  - People who are bored, unhappy, insecure, unmotivated, immature and/or incompetent try to take others down with them - to wallow in THEIR misery.
- Difficult People have a CHOICE in how they behave
- Difficult People are Reinforced for Being Difficult!
  - Difficult people don't become difficult overnight
  - They are difficult because they have years of "success" in getting their way
  - Our job is to break the cycle (think two-year- old temper tantrums.....)
- Difficult People treat EVERYONE badly.
  - So, we need to STOP taking their behavior personally!

## We have FOUR choices in how we deal with difficult people

- You Can Stay and Do Nothing  
**Suffering in silence**
  - This does NOT solve the problem and your frustration will almost always build up and get worse over time.**Complaining to someone who can do nothing about your problem person**
  - This is an equally bad solution as it tends to lower moral and productivity, while postponing an effective solution.
- You can vote with your feet
  - Not all situations are resolvable.
  - Some are not WORTH resolving.
  - Voting with your feet MAKES SENSE when it no longer makes sense to continue to deal with the difficult person.
  - If you are at risk of losing control; walk away

- You can change your attitude about the difficult person
  - You can learn to look at, listen to, and feel about your difficult person differently
  - This change in attitude will set you free from your reactions to their behavior
  - You **MUST** change your own attitude to find the courage and flexibility to move on to the fourth way to deal with difficult people.
- You can change your behavior.
  - You can't control the behavior of others. You can only control your response to them

### THE DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

**Task Focused**  
**Passive**

**People Focused**  
**Aggressive**

#### **TASK FOCUSED**

##### **INTENT:**

To get things done  
To get things done right

#### **PEOPLE FOCUSED:**

##### **INTENT:**

To get along  
To get appreciated



#### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN INTENT IS NOT MET?**

##### **Get it Done People become more Controlling**

Try to take over and push ahead

##### **Get it Right People become more Perfectionistic**

Finding every flaw and potential error

##### **Get Along People become Approval Seeking**

Sacrificing personal goals to please others

##### **Get Appreciated People become Attention Getting**

Trying to force others to notice them

## CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR (Add your notes here)

### CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR

#### 1. Dump the Victim Mentality

- Whining is not a substitute for action!
- Feeling sorry for yourself or bemoaning your situation will NOT change it.
- It's your job to change your environment if you don't like it.
- "You're nobody's victim without your permission." Eleanor Roosevelt

#### 2. Does it REALLY matter if I'm right?

- Are you arguing merely for the sake of being right?
- Does it truly matter if you are right?
- Why do you need to be right?
- What will you gain from being right?

#### 3. Learn to Appreciate Criticism

"the subtlety of simplicity"

- Let go of your knee-jerk reaction to criticism.
- When you verbally appreciate someone who is criticizing you, you let go of the need to defend, explain or justify, your behavior.
- It also takes away the power of the difficult person and shuts down the interaction.
- You do NOT lose face, but you do GAIN peace!

A simple "thanks" is all it takes.

- "Thanks for being honest"
- "I appreciate your feedback."
- "Thanks for caring so much."
- "I appreciate your input."

- **THIS TAKES SOME PRACTICE – BUT IT IS WORTH IT IN THE LONG RUN....**

#### 4. Conserve Your Energy

- Energy spent dwelling on negative people
  - how badly they have treated you
  - how unfair it all is
  - how miserable they make you
- is energy that could have been spent on YOUR personal well-being.

"Where Attention Goes, Energy Flows"

#### 5. Use "I" rather than "You"

- "YOU" can feel like an accusation – which can escalate interactions with difficult people

#### 6. Observe and Listen

- You need to study your difficult person in order to manage their behavior.
- What sets them off?

- Is this long-term behavior?
- Identify their focus and level of assertiveness
  - Is this person task focused/aggressive?
  - Person focused/passive?
  - Or something else?

## 7. Blending

“No one cooperates with someone they perceive is against them”

- The first step in managing difficult people is to minimize the perceived differences between you.
- Blend your behavior and communication to match the intent, body language, and communication style with your difficult person.

If you are dealing with someone who wants to:

- **Get it Done** You acknowledge the importance of getting tasks done and your conversations are brief and to the point.
- **Get it Along** You take time to engage in chit-chat and considerate communications (lots of “please” and “thank you”.)
- **Get Appreciation** You acknowledge their contributions with words of enthusiastic appreciation.

Consider the Worst Case Scenario

### **ASK YOURSELF:**

- If I DO NOT respond to this difficult person, what is the worst thing that could happen?
- If I DO respond to this difficult person, what is the worst thing that could happen?

## 8. Stop rewarding difficult people for their behavior

- Many times we aren’t aware that we are actually adding to the problem.
- When we back down, give in, give up, or give ground, we are just rewarding difficult people for being difficult.
- Expect Respect!

## 9. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into the difficult behavior

- Have a mint!

## 10. Communicate Assertively and Effectively (and become aware of the communication used by others)



## Communication Styles

Each time we interact with someone else, we have a choice in terms of how we choose to communicate. Three of them are poor choices, the other is outstanding....

### **Assertive Communication (the outstanding one)**

- "Saying what you mean and meaning what you say"
- Relies on honesty, openness, and a sense of responsibility for a positive outcome,
- Builds mutual trust between the people involved.
- Uses an "I" message to take responsibility for issues (e.g., "This is how I feel...")
- States opinions respectfully, acknowledging that the other person may see the situation differently.
- Listens attentively, uses good eye contact, and positive body language.
- Does not allow others to take advantage.
- Is often difficult to employ because we are not conditioned to use this style of communication during childhood years (and beyond)

### **Aggressive Communication**

- Uses hurt and anger to manipulate others.
- Discounts or disregards feelings of others
- Will say or do anything to get their own way.
- Hurt/Guilt
  - Whining and Complaining without initiating or accepting solutions
  - Dwells on the past
  - Blames others for mistakes
  - Gets feelings hurt easily
  - Has numerous physical ailments
  - Requires/demands constant attention
- Anger/Fear
  - Likes to argue - must always be right
  - Is rude, abrasive, or sarcastic
  - Often is rude, obnoxious, domineering, and loud

- Tries to intimidate rather than build mutual respect
- Is frequently out of control in tone and action
- Creates tension, mistrust, and resistant

### **Passive Communication**

- Avoids confrontation at all costs.
- Put personal needs and concerns last; feels guilty about getting own needs met.
- Strong desire to be liked.
- Agrees to all requests and demands, even unreasonable ones, rather than saying "no."
- May produce poor results (paperwork, therapy outcomes) because of over commitment.
- May become overwhelmed and tired; eventually cannot fulfill even basic commitments.
- May ultimately "blow up" or "burn out" after a period of time.

### **Passive-Aggressive Communicaiton**

- Combination of the desire to avoid direct confrontation (passive) and the desire to "win" - get one's own way (aggressive) at all costs.
- Is exceedingly deceitful and dishonest
- Is done with the intent to manipulate people or "teach them a lesson."
- Is damaging and dangerous to building trust and mutual respect.
- Demonstrated in behaviors such as:
  - Using the "silent treatment"
  - Often spends time gossiping/tattling on others
  - May seem supportive on the surface but actually criticizing people behind their backs.
  - Enjoys seeing others people fail
  - Likes to get people to take sides against another person, policy, or idea
  - Is the exact opposite of open, honest, assertive communication that promotes positive interactions and reduces stress

## ***Managing Difficult People***

### **The BULLDOZER**

Intent: Get Things Done

- Aggressive
- Controlling
- Overbearing
- Pushy
- Angry
- Obnoxious

**Do :Command Respect**

- **Stand your ground**
  - ~Make eye contact
  - ~Visualize
  - ~Breathe
- **Interrupt (Use Name)**
- **Identify Intent**
- **Provide a "Bottom Line"**
- **Peace with Honor**

"I asked you to set up a new records system a week ago. Why isn't it in place yet? We need to get organized and we are way behind!"

- Let the bulldozer wind down (stand your ground/listen)
- "Lori, Lori, Lori, Lori..." (Interrupt the attack)
- "I understand that you are concerned about getting this new system up and running to increase our efficiency" (Identify intent)
- "From my point of view, the time I am investing in researching this will insure that we invest in a quality system that will save us time and money" (Bottom Line)
- "When you are ready to discuss this with me calmly, I am more than happy to meet with you." (Peace with honor)

**DON'T**

- Push back/Counterattack
- Become defensive
- Attempt to explain, defend, or justify
- Allow yourself to get run over or withdraw from the interaction

## *The Sniper*

Intent:

Get It Done OR Get Appreciated

Do

Adjust your Attitude

- Don't React to Sniping
  - It gives them power and motivates them to keep doing it
- Remember that sniping is a symptom of insecurity
  - Think of them as an insecure grade schooler
  - (I am rubber you are glue, whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you!)
- Bring the sniper out of hiding
  - Deal directly and assertively and you will disarm the sniper
  - "Yeah - that Jenn. You ask her what time it is, she'll tell you how to make a watch." She's got nothing to say, but you have to wait so long to find out! HA HA HA! Just kidding"

STOP, BACKTRACK (Interrupt yourself -even in the middle of a sentence then backtrack to what they said. This signals "you missed me.")

USE SEARCHLIGHT QUESTIONS: "When you say that, what are you really trying to say? What does that have to do with this? (Bring the sniper out of hiding and disarm him or her)

- "What, can't you take a joke?" (typical sniper response)
- "I can take a joke, but I'm still wondering what you were trying to say?" (stand your ground)
- THIS CAN GO Two WAYS:
  - The sniper backs off immediately in which case YOU back off
  - The sniper does not back off in which case YOU just keep firing back until the limb the sniper is sitting on breaks and he/she back off
    - Hold your ground
    - Interrupt the interrupter
    - Backtrack to the main accusation
    - State your bottom line

Third Party Sniping  
(Tattling)

- Tattling in the workplace happens for the same reasons it happens in school: Immaturity, need for attention, trying to establish a sense of importance, trying to undermine others.
- The key to dealing with tattlers is to DEAL WITH THE TATTLER.
- DO NOT get pulled into the third parties tattling on the tattler. Go directly to the source and ask, "Is this true?"
- (Bring that sniper out of hiding! Make him or her uncomfortable).

Don't

- Let the Sniper/Tattle have power over you
- Allow others to engage in third party sniping "tattling" with you.

## **The Whiner**

Intent: Get It Right

- Wallows in worries and woe
- Only offers complaints - never solutions
- Complaints are not geared to change
- Do not complain to EVERYONE but the offending party
- Wants things to be right, but can only see what's wrong

Do

- Listen with compassion - briefly
- Interrupt if necessary
- Ask them is there is something specific that they need you to do
- Direct them to the proper person
- Draw the line

Don't

- Agree with whiners - it just encourages them to keep whining
- Disagree - they will feel compelled to repeat their problems
- Try to solve their problems - you can't

## **The Wet Blanket**

Intent: Get it Right

- Since perfection is the standard for everything, nothing measures up.
- Nitpicker
- Afraid of failing
- May be a grumbler or apathetic
- Hopeless
- Bitter
- Negativity is their M.O.
- Is TOXIC to individuals and organizations
  - Undermines motivation
  - Stifles creativity
  - Leads to hopeless and depression in others (spreads like CRAZY!)
  - Negatively impacts stress levels, productivity, and job satisfaction

DO: Guard against Being Influenced by the Wet Blanket

- Consider voting with your feet
- Use them as a resource to help you find potential flaws in a plan
- Leave the door open ("If you change your mind, let me know.")
- Identify positive intent ("Val, you're obviously a person who cares about making sure things go well.")

Don't

- Allow contempt to substitute for compassion
- Allow their negativity to affect you
- Don't expect the wet blanket to "dry out" overnight

## **The Bully**

Intent: Get It Done Right, Get it Done, Get Appreciated, Get Attention

- Cannot be happy unless others are miserable
- Uses passive aggressive and aggressive communication styles
- Must have willing accomplices
- Lives in a world of misery and contempt for themselves
- Uses sniping, gossip, and fear mongering
- Cannot see that they are the problem - complains about everyone else.

Do

- Limit your interactions with a bully
- Don't play the victim
- Stay professional and be crystal clear that you will not be drawn in
- Interrupt if necessary
- "Have a mint"
- Take a Stand/Draw the Line
- Use assertive communication
- Document/Share if necessary
- Consider Your Safety

Don't

- Agree with or join the bully's team
- Allow yourself to be intimidated
- Attack back
- Allow the bully to suck energy out of your life to feed their miserable soul

DIFFICULT PEOPLE BIG IDEAS

### **Expect Respect!**

We train other people how to treat us.

**Don't** allow yourself (or others) to make excuses for the person who is being difficult

**Don't** take their behavior personally - they most likely treat everyone badly

**Don't** reward difficult people for their negative behavior

**Have a mint!**

**You can't control the behavior of others- only your OWN behavior in response to them.**

PRIMARY RESOURCE: I Used to Have a Handle on Life, But it Broke.  
Shari Robertson, Dynamic Resources.

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