



Managing Emotions in Conflict Situations



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Meeting your Conflict Management Needs with Spirit and Strategy.

Three Elements of Conflict Conversations

Every difficult conversation requires attention to three key elements: content, process, and emotion. Once attention is given to these three elements, conversations flow with greater ease and agility.

Content: Attending to “what” we are talking about.

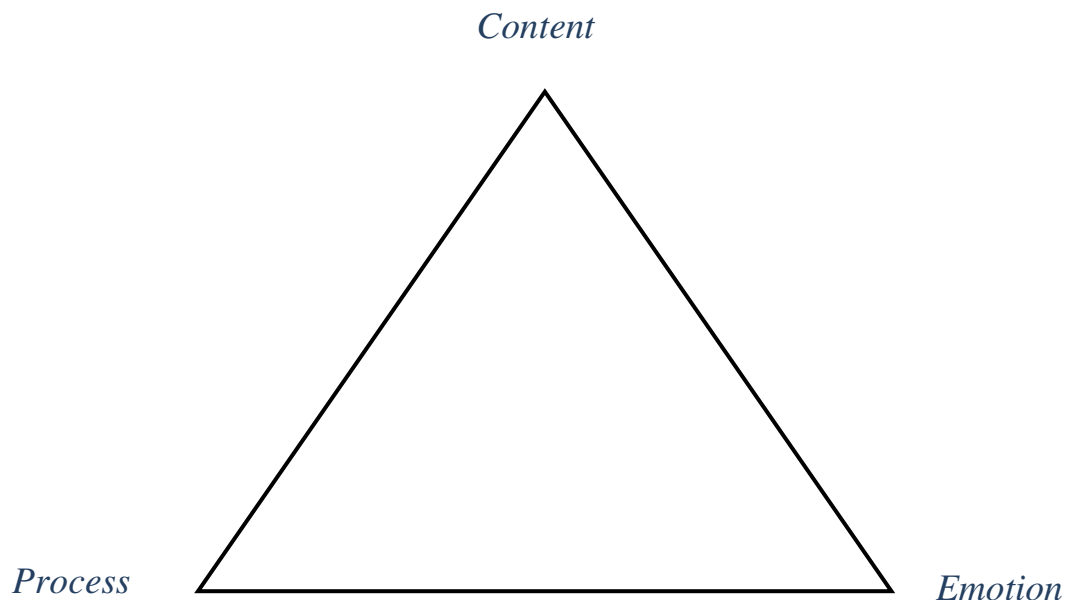
It is critical that the speaker clearly and neutrally, without blame or judgment, lay out the topics for discussion. Furthermore, the speaker must attend to speaking from a place of needs while reframing the receiver’s message into his/her needs.

Process: Attending to “how” we are talking.

We quite naturally engage in conversations using a step-by-step approach. When that approach is chosen strategically, it allows both the speaker and the receiver to stay on track.

Emotion: Attending to the “sensations” experienced during the conversation.

Given our grasp of the English language, we are able to label internal sensations as feelings, experiences, or thoughts. The goal is to attend to the internal sensations experienced and use this information to guide the conversation. Similarly, in difficult conversations it is critical to attend to the external expression of the other person’s internal experience and use that expression to guide the conversation.



Managing Triggers

1. Engage in meditation: sound, thought, body, eating, and sight meditation.
2. Engage in gratitude. What is the best part of the worst part? Gratitude increases optimism, self-worth, and positive action engagement.
3. Look for a laugh. Laughing alters chemical cocktails in our brain. Stress chemicals such as adrenaline, cortisol, and dopamine decrease, and endorphins and immunity improving chemicals increase.
4. Manage your internal dialogue.
5. Engage in novelty. Something small or big that is new for your brain: a new book, a trip, an adventure, or rearranging your kitchen.
6. Manage your body movement.
 - a. Recognize and control any involuntary body movement.
 - b. Relax and straighten your posture.
 - c. Breathe.
 - d. Ground yourself into your chair or your feet into the ground.
8. Manage your pace. Pace affects the amount of cortisol in your system, so slow down your body movement, the pacing of your words, your eye movement, etc.
9. Separate yourself from your role. Create a ritual between home and work that helps you shed your role. Taking a shower or changing clothes after work helps the brain release stress and increase prefrontal cortex functioning.
10. Ensure an adequate ongoing supply of glucose to your brain. Eat regular meals throughout the day that are high in complex carbs (whole-grain products, legumes and vegetables), lean protein, fatty acids (fish oil), and vitamins and minerals. Key foods include apples, green tea, oats, nuts, fish, and soybeans.
11. Surround yourself with people who provide positive bonding. Mirror neurons in our brain result in us mirroring the experiences of those we choose to spend time with. This can result in over-activation of the limbic areas if you are around anxious, depressed, moody, or dramatic people. Positive social networks are considered one of the best approaches to maximizing electrical activity in your prefrontal cortex if you belong to a western culture that emphasizes independence. People with strong social networks move through the process of change quickly, recover from loss faster, and typically have a more positive outlook on life.
12. Change your trigger management plan regularly. Methods of coping are intended to work for periods of time before losing their effectiveness. **No single coping strategy is going to be effective all the time.** That is why it is necessary to have a repertoire of perception checking techniques.