



Before a Clearing Conversation

*The easiest, the most tempting,
and the least creative response to conflict within an organization
is to pretend it does not exist.*

Lyle Schaller

We all come to conversations with intentions, what are mine?

- _____ Staying curious
- _____ To learn something
- _____ Prove I am right
- _____ Make you feel better
- _____ Make you feel sorry
- _____ To make sure you don't blame me
- _____ To take responsibility
- _____ To get you to take responsibility
- _____ To connect with you
- _____ To fix something (maybe you)
- _____ To make you like me
- _____ To create a new future

Ask yourself:

- Am I above or below the line? How low?
- Am I mind reading? "I know what he/she is thinking."
- Am I fortune telling? "This is how this will go . . ."
- What stories am I telling myself? "He/she only cares about . . ."
- What can we accomplish together that I cannot accomplish alone?

What do you want understood/heard?

How do we move forward from here?

- Be succinct, share in one out breath as objectively and specifically as possible – focus on what is unarguable
- How might you turn this complaint into a request?

The Clearing Process

*True freedom starts with absolute honesty.
The moment you call an issue by its real name,
you're already learning how to make it less harmful.*

Martha Beck

1. Affirm your intention and introduce the topic
2. Describe what happened in a way that includes the other side, "I've noticed a recurring issue we seem to have and I'd like to talk about it."
3. Establish a time to talk
4. CLEAR
 - a. I observed ...
 - b. The story I told myself ...
 - c. I feel/felt ...
 - d. My part in this is . . .
 - e. I would like ...
5. Pause – Breathe. Listen with the willingness to be changed by what you hear
6. Ask for their reaction and input
7. Have I said everything I need to say? (Doesn't mean the issue is resolved). Take 100% responsibility for your part in working toward clearing
8. Mutually agree upon next steps. At a minimum, set a specific check-in date

When others are Clearing with you:

- Breathe, quiet yourself
- Notice how you listen - what thoughts are running around inside your head?
 - Pulled by external distractions
 - Focused on what's going on with the other person
 - Seeking to understand the problem
 - Going below the line
 - Getting angry
- Speak unarguably - share your observation, story, and feelings
- Own your part
- Listen for potential
 - Stay present
 - Look for the benefit
 - Ask yourself how the relationship can be strengthened by this conversation

Adapted from Gay and Katie Hendricks, Conscious Leadership Group, and other sources

Moving On After a Clearing Conversation

Forgiveness is giving up all hope for a better past.

Lily Tomlin

- Close the clearing
 - Acknowledge that it was tough
 - There were misunderstandings and differences in perception and opinion
 - Focus on the value that came from the conversation - What did you learn?
 - What will *you* do differently as a result
 - Let it go – that was then . . . this is now
- Move the conversation forward - Summarize desired outcomes and personal commitments
- Proactively follow up
 - Continue the 'designed alliance' conversation – putting the past behind and focus on how you want to shape the relationship for the future
 - Revisit what success looks like in this partnership
 - Reiterate what is important to each
- Do NOT behave as if all is resolved until it really is
 - Commit to meet weekly/monthly/quarterly whatever feels needed

The words of wise women:

In some ways, we will always be different. In other ways, we will always be the same. There is always room to disagree and blame, just as there is always room to take a new perspective and empathize. Understanding is a choice.

Vironika Tugaleva

Every person in this life has something to teach me--and as soon as I accept that, I open myself to truly listening.

Catherine Doucette