

Preparing for the Conversation: Self-awareness - Intentions

Conflict conversations can be challenging, but if handled well, can be helpful to address issues when they inevitably come up. Ideally, a conflict conversation is more likely to be constructive for you and for the other person (when possible) when ***your intention and purpose is clear***. Understanding your motivation and intention, as well as what you would like as a result of the conversation is important. When you know your purpose, you can make better decisions about how to approach the other person, what to say and how to say it.

In preparing for a conversation:

Plan

Know your intention and purpose. It helps to think about both your intention and purpose ***before*** you have the conversation.

Intention includes:

- What is my motivation for having this conversation?
- Is my intention clear to me?
- Is my intention rooted in anger and hurt?
Is my intention positive and calm? Is it both?

Purpose includes:

- What do I want to receive/get out of this conversation?
- Do I just want to be listened to?
- Do I want something specific to change?

Source: Dayton Mediation Centre

Preparing for the Conversation: Self-awareness- Reactions

Identify and plan for **reactions**.

A Reaction happens from weakness and self-absorption, not a place of strength and openness (a response.)

- They can get in the way of achieving your purpose as well as modify your intention.
- Identifying and planning for reactions and how to handle them before the conversation can help.
- Another way of describing what causes a reaction, is when someone “pushes your buttons.” This gets at the actions of the other and how it affects you. You have a choice to react or respond

Ask yourself:

- What are my “buttons” in a conversation?
- What are my “buttons” when talking with a specific person?
- How do I push the other person’s “buttons” when we talk?

Once you have identified what “buttons” tend to cause a reaction in you as well as someone else, think about:

- How will I respond if my “buttons” are pushed?
- How will I respond if the other person reacts to their “buttons” being pushed?

It helps to remember your purpose and intention. **Decide** how **you will** or **will not respond** if your buttons are pushed.

*Source: Dayton Mediation Centre

Preparing for the Conversation: Self-awareness – Emotion and Timing

Emotions and Timing are important to having a constructive conversation.

Consider:

- **Your state of mind. Wait** to have the conversation until you are in a calm state of mind so that you increase the likelihood that the other person can hear you. ***Tone of voice is the greatest indicator, along with choice of words, to conflict escalation and de-escalation.***

- **Time it right.** Have the conversation at a time when:
 - you won't be interrupted,
 - when there is enough time to really discuss the issue,
 - At a time of day that works for both/all of you.
 - What can you do if the timing never seems right?

- **Have the conversation.**

- **Follow up.**
 - What decision or decisions have you reached as a result of the conversation?
 - What are the next steps for you?
 - Is a check-in needed at some point in the near future?

*Source: Dayton Mediation Centre

Example Scenario

You notice that a trans youth client has been withdrawn and distressed after trying to access a community program. They tell you they were misgendered repeatedly and made to feel unwelcome. You have arranged a meeting with the program coordinator to discuss what happened.

INTENTION:

- To meet the coordinator in person and share what happened.
 - Wanting to “win” or prove the coordinator wrong.
 - To advocate for the client and ensure this harm does not continue.
 - To connect and find ways to make the program safer and more inclusive for trans youth.
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Purpose:

- To help the coordinator understand the impact of misgendering and exclusion.
- To co-create strategies for a safer, inclusive environment.
- Expecting the coordinator to immediately apologize or implement all changes.
- To gather insight into how systemic practices or culture may have contributed to the situation.

Plan for Reactions:

They might push your buttons if:

- Denial of harm
- Blaming the client
- Defensiveness

You might push their buttons if you use:

- Confrontational or shaming language
 - Exaggerating incidents
 - Threatening consequences immediately
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EMOTIONS & TIMING

Emotions/Timing:

- Schedule the conversation when both parties are calm and have time.
- Prepare strategies to stay grounded and maintain a professional, supportive stance.