



Skillful Discussions: Crucial Conversations

Dr. Joseph D. Rei

Learning Objectives

- The participants in this course will learn:
 - How to develop the art of Skillful Communication
 - How to balance inquiry with advocacy
 - How to disagree and maintain an open dialogue



Skillful Communicators

- The skilled communicator talks in a language of the listeners.
- These communicators take care that the message is understandable and understood.
- They ask questions to discover new meaning.



How is it used?

Most helpful when entering a negotiation or some other uncomfortable conversation where there is a perceived adversarial situation.



What do we do when we're faced with uncomfortable communication situations?

- Avoid it as long as possible?
- Fret about it?
- Make a joke out of the situation and hope the other person picks up on it?
- Directly and skillfully communicate your interests?
- Prepare for the session and follow the plan?



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Unresolved issues linger
- Commitment is hard when you disagree
- Repeated mistakes
- Loss of clients



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Stagnant performance
- Loss of reputation
- Loss of Company
- Personal stress



Do you know that awesome
feeling when you get into
bed, fall right to sleep, stay
asleep all night, and wake
up feeling refreshed?

Me neither

somecards
some cards



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Reduced Health
- Anxiety – sleepless nights
- Preoccupied with the wrong issues
- \$\$\$



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Reduced recruiting – bad morale
- Reduced enthusiasm/selling/marketing
- Reduced confidence
- Retention issues



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- The longer we wait, the less we get (\$)
- Procrastination – fear of conflict
- Future project opportunities lost by not facing project problems
- Stress – unresolved team problems creates it





"Here are the results of the latest employee satisfaction study."

What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Loss of productivity – due to lack of direction/resolution
- Loss of morale – schedules – unrealistic expectations creates resentment and affects quality if conflict is not addressed.
- Loss of commitment
- Loss of trust



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Loss of opportunity due to not handling conflict in a timely manner
- Sets a bad example
- Quality of life



What are the Costs of Avoiding Conflict?

- Damages relationships
- Lost ideas/synergy
- Unresolved issues (personnel) become a cancer

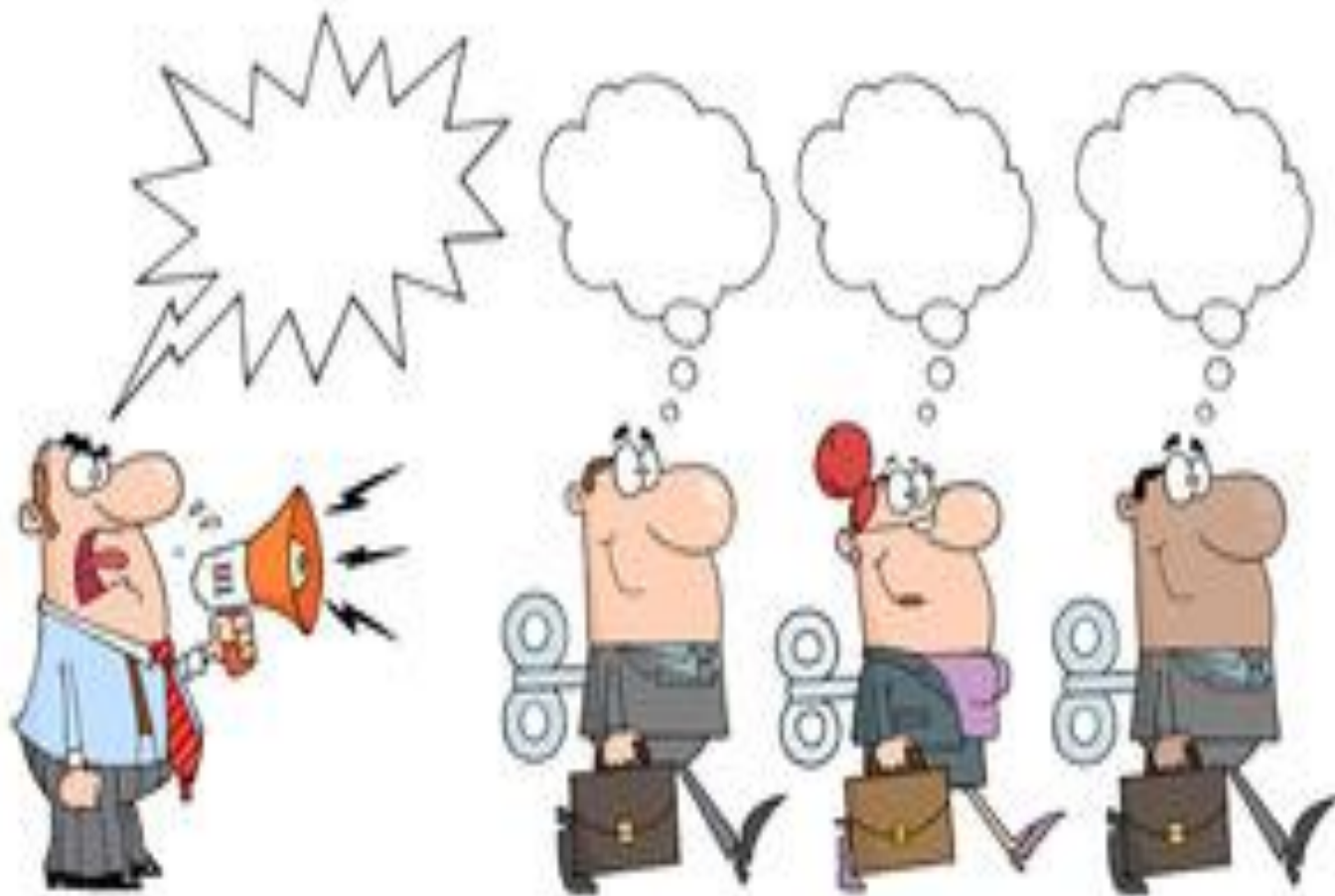


So, if we know all these things
happen

Why don't we do it?

Answers we've heard?

- All our people are professionals I shouldn't have to tell them how to do their jobs.
- I'll let them figure it out on their own.
- They will eventually figure out that I'm right.
- It's not that important.



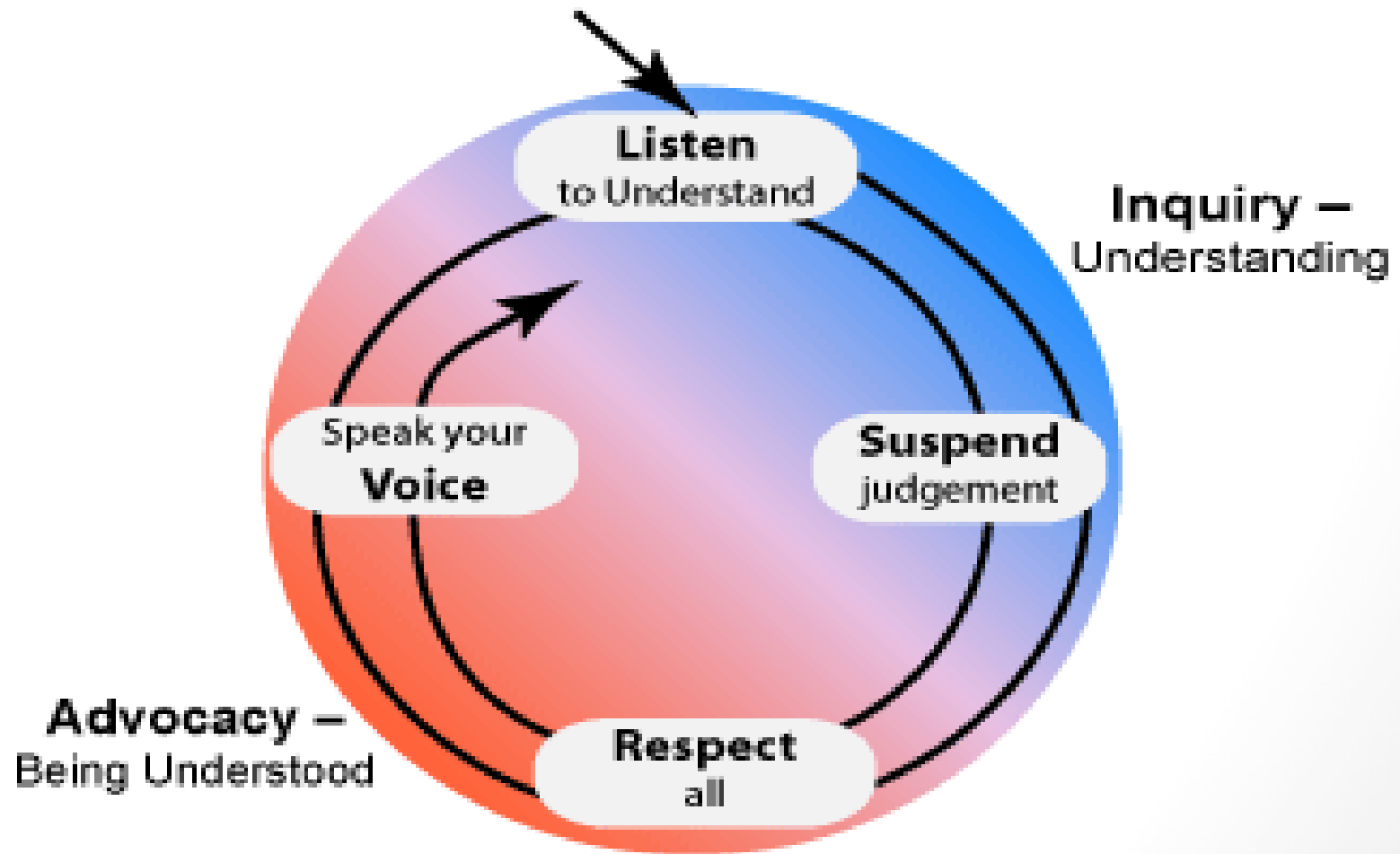
Maybe?

- Maybe it's because we've never been taught the Art of Skillful Communication.
- Maybe it's due to our lack of confidence that the conversation will turn out the way we want it when the stakes are high.
- We're sure you have other reasons.



Five Parts of Skillful Communication

- Pay attention to your intentions
- Balance advocacy with inquiry
- Build shared meaning
- Use self-awareness as a resource
- Explore impasses



Pay attention to your intentions

- What is my intention? What do I want?
- Am I willing to be influenced?
- If not, what is the purpose of the conversation?
- Use Context – Purpose – Results to plan the meeting

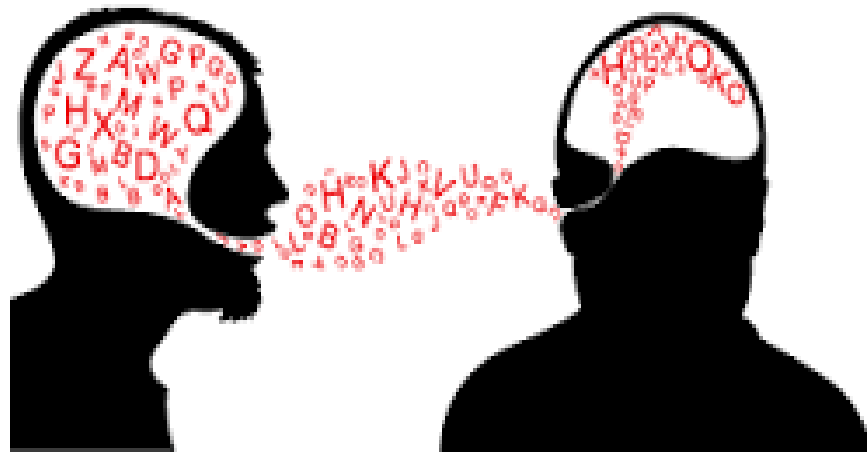
Balance advocacy with inquiry

- Be aware of too much challenging or too much passivity
- Notice the quality of your own and others' listening
- Surface your own and others' assumptions
- Say everything that is on your mind, if appropriate, rather than holding things for later private discussions



Build shared meaning

- Check for common understanding of the meaning of words
- Develop group definitions when needed
- Use language with precision



Use self-awareness as a resource

- What am I thinking? (pause)
- What am I feeling? (pause)
- What do I want at this moment? (pause)



Explore impasses

- What do we agree on?
- Disagree on?





"First, can we agree that it's a big back yard?"

How to Improve Advocacy

- Make your thinking process visible. Publicly test your conclusions and assumptions.
- State your assumptions... and describe the data that led to them. “Here’s what I think, and here’s how I got there.”



How to Improve Advocacy

- Explain your assumptions“I assumed that...”
- Explain the context of your point of view....include who will be affected by what you propose, how they will be affected, and why.
- Give examples of what you propose. “To get a clear picture of what I’m talking about, imagine that you’re the customer who will be affected...”

$6 + 3 = 9$
but so does $5 + 4$

The way you do things is not always
the only way to do them.

Respect other people's way of thinking

@4biddenkowledge

How to Improve Advocacy

- As you speak, try to picture the other peoples' perspectives on what you're saying.
- Encourage others to explore your model, your assumptions, and your data.
 - “What do you think about what I just said? or “Do you see any flaws in my reasoning”? or “What can you add”?
- Refrain from defensiveness when your ideas are questioned. If you are advocating something worthwhile, it will only get stronger by being tested.

what
do YOU
think?

dreamstime.com

How to Improve Advocacy

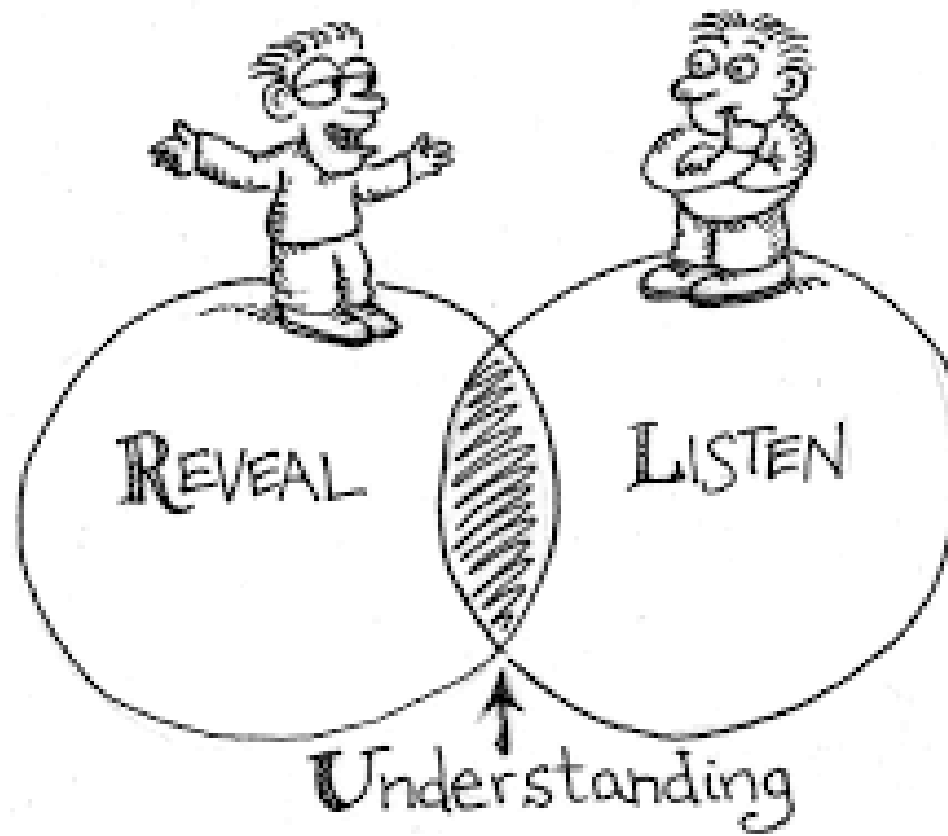
- Reveal where you are least clear in your thinking.
 - Rather than making you vulnerable, it defuses the force of advocates who are opposed to you, and invites improvement.
 - “Here’s one aspect which you might help me think through...”
- Even when advocating: Listen, stay open, and encourage others to provide different views.
 - “Do you see it differently?”



"Sometimes you need to look at Life
from a different perspective."

Process for Improved Inquiry

- Ask others to make their thinking process visible.
- Find out what data they are operating with.
 - “What leads you to conclude that?”
 - “What data do you have for that?”
 - “What causes you to say that?”
- Use non-aggressive language.
 - Ask in a way that does not provoke defensiveness or ‘lead the witness.’ Instead of “What’s your proof? ” or “What do you mean?” say, “Can you help me understand your thinking here?”



Process for Improved Inquiry

- Find out as much as you can about why they are saying what they are saying.
 - “What is the significance of that?”
 - “How does this relate to your other concerns?”
 - “Show me your thinking on this.”
- Test what they say by asking for broader contexts or for other examples.
 - “How would your proposal affect...?”
 - “Is this similar to...?”
 - “Can you describe a typical example...?”
- Check your understanding of what they have said.
 - “Am I correct that you’re saying...?”

**IT'S OK IF YOU
DISAGREE WITH ME.
I CAN'T FORCE YOU TO BE RIGHT.**

How to disagree

- Steps to take when you face a point of view with which you disagree:
 - Inquire about what has led the person to that view.
 - “Are you taking into account data that I have not considered?”
- Make sure you truly understand the view.
 - “If I understand you correctly, you’re saying that...”
- Explore, listen, and offer your own views in an open way.
 - “Have you considered...?”

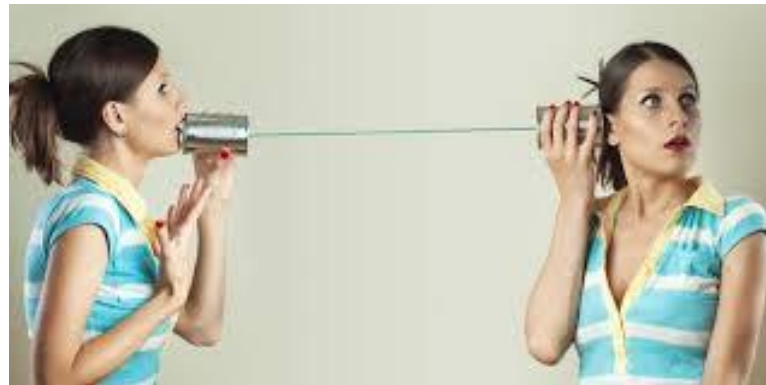


How to disagree

- Listen for the larger meaning...
 - that may come out of honest, open sharing of alternative ideas.
- Watch for what is being thought but not said.
 - “When you say such-and-such, I worry that it means...”
- Raise your concerns and state what is leading you to have them.
 - “I have a hard time seeing that, because of this reasoning...”

During this session we've:

- Identified many business reasons why we need to develop the Art of Skillful Communications
- Defined the elements of the Art of Skillful communication
- How to balance inquiry with advocacy
- Negotiating impasses
- How to disagree and maintain an open dialogue





Questions & Answers

Presenters

Dr. Joseph D. Rei, Partner
MORF Consulting

jrei@morfconsulting.com

816-522-0293

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