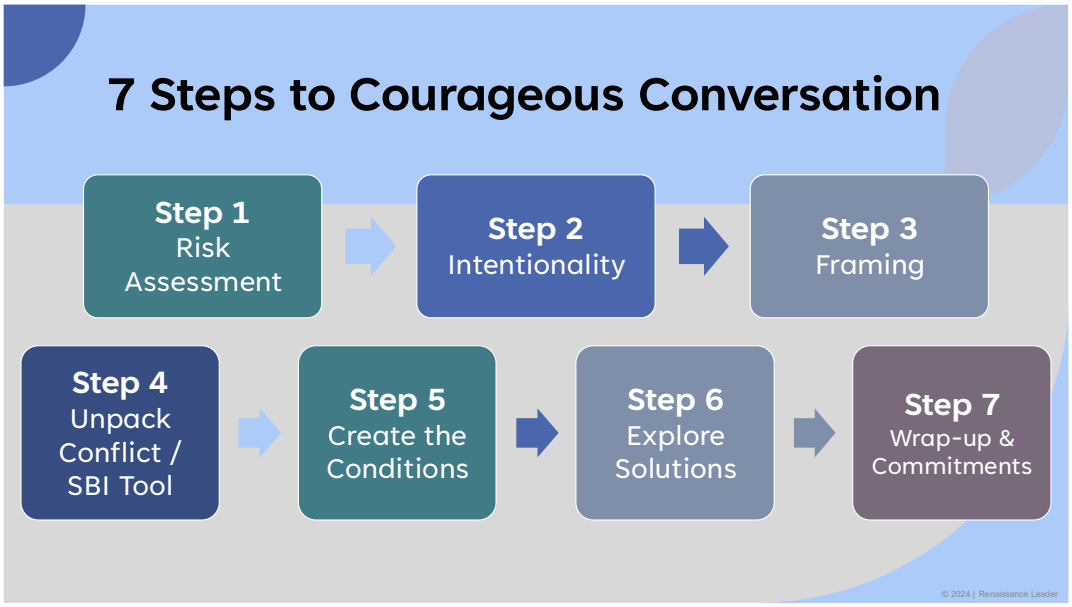
Courageous Conversation Toolkit



STEP 1 – Risk Assessment

What is your risk assessment about this conversation? If choose #3 or #4 – outline clearly your rationale. We recommend that you review it with someone – to make sure you aren't just trying to avoid the conversation.

- Option 1 -- Have a Courageous Conversation
- Option #2 -- Have a Courageous Conversation with Help
- Option #3 -- Make peace with what is
- Option #4 -- Restructure or terminate the relationship

Note -- Options #3 & #4 are rarer – generally after you have tried #1 and #2 numerous times to no avail.

STEP 2 – Intentionality

- How do you want to show up for the conversation?
- What does that look like? (active listening, empathy and validation)
- What do you need to do to show up that way?
- What triggers you? How can you stay above the line when triggered? Review DISC for yourself and other person.

STEP 3 – Framing

- What outcome would you like to see as opposed to what you don't want
- When you…the impact is…what I'd like to see is…how might we do this together
- What questions do you want to ask to understand the other person's perspective, priorities, concerns?

STEP 4 – Unpack Conflict – SBI Tool (if needed)

- Situation - Describe the specific situation in which the behavior occurred.
- Behavior – Describe the actual, observable behavior.
- Impact - Describe the results of the behavior.
- Invite a constructive conversation based on the above.

Step 5 – Create the Conditions – Where, How, When?

- Find the right time and the right space
- Prime for connection – get your head in the right space
- Active listening, empathy, validation
- Manage expectations for yourself and the other person
    - Accept that it may be uncomfortable
    - It may take time and several conversations
    - You may need to pause and come back
    - Expect to revisit or reiterate

Step 6 – Explore Solutions

- Start with open-ended questions to understand the other person's perspective.
- Paraphrase to ensure clarity and alignment.
- Encourage mutual brainstorming of solutions.
    - What do you think about …?
    - How could we fix …?
    - What would happen if …?
    - How else could you do …?
    - Then what?
    - What do you think you will lose if you …?
    - What have you tried before?
    - What do you want to do next?
    - How can I be of help?

Step 7 – Wrap-Up / Commitments

- Agree on specific next steps and accountability measures.
- Outline commitments to each other
- Create check-in times if needed

Other Notes

DiSC - Under Stress / Tips when Tense

D STYLE	i STYLE	S STYLE	C STYLE
▪ May become more assertive, demanding, or impatient. ▪ Focuses on results and may dismiss emotions or details.	▪ May become overly emotional, distracted, or seek reassurance. ▪ Tends to avoid conflict, focusing instead on maintaining relationships.	▪ May shut down, withdraw, or become overly accommodating to avoid conflict. ▪ Focuses on maintaining harmony and may suppress their own needs.	▪ May become overly critical, rigid, or fixated on details. ▪ Struggles with uncertainty and may resist emotional displays.
▪ Be direct, concise, and focused on solutions. ▪ Avoid taking their assertiveness personally; it's often their way of regaining control. ▪ Offer clear options or actionable steps to resolve the situation. ▪ Show confidence and avoid appearing indecisive or overly emotional.	▪ Stay positive and approachable; acknowledge their emotions without dismissing them. ▪ Emphasize collaboration and reassure them that relationships remain intact. ▪ Avoid being overly critical or harsh; focus on solutions and shared goals. ▪ Provide verbal affirmation or encouragement to ease their tension.	▪ Create a calm, supportive space for discussion; avoid aggressive or high-pressure tactics. ▪ Gently encourage them to share their thoughts or concerns. ▪ Reassure them that their perspective matters and their input is valuable. ▪ Provide clear guidance and avoid sudden changes or ambiguity.	▪ Stay calm, logical, and professional; avoid emotional outbursts. ▪ Provide detailed explanations and facts to address their concerns. ▪ Be patient with their need for thorough analysis and accuracy. ▪ Avoid pressuring them to make quick decisions without sufficient data. 2

Problem Solving & DiSC

D STYLE	i STYLE	S STYLE	C STYLE
▪ Ensure they have clear goals and outcomes to work toward. ▪ Encourage them to slow down and consider potential risks or long-term impacts. ▪ Provide concise, high-level information to keep them engaged.	▪ Encourage them to balance creativity with practicality. ▪ Provide structure (but not too much) or assign someone to manage details and logistics. ▪ Involve them in team-based solutions where communication is key.	▪ Create a calm, supportive environment for decision making. ▪ Provide reassurance and time to process information. ▪ Encourage them to speak up and contribute their thoughtful insights.	▪ Provide ample data, evidence, and time for analysis. ▪ Encourage them to trust their expertise and not get stuck in over analysis. ▪ Balance their need for precision with deadlines or decision-making timelines.

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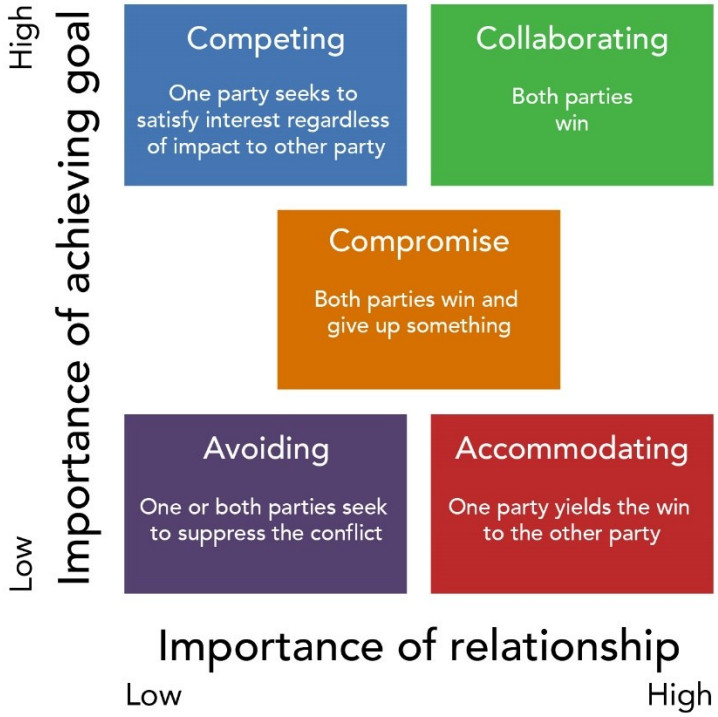
TIPS TO REMEMBER

Conflict Styles

In a dispute, it's often easier to describe how others respond than to evaluate how we respond. Each of us has a predominant conflict style. In any conflict ask, "Is my preferred conflict handling style the very best I can use to resolve this conflict or solve this problem?"



- Competing -- A competitive style can be appropriate when you have to implement an unpopular decision, make a quick decision, the decision is vital in a crisis or it is important to let others know how important an issue is to you – "standing up for your right." However, relationships can be harmed beyond repair or others may feel they have to use covert methods to get their needs met.
- Accommodating -- Accommodation is useful when admitting you are wrong or when you want to minimize losses to preserve relationships. However, it can become competitive – "I am nicer than you are" – and may result in reduced creativity and increased power imbalances.
- Avoiding -- Avoidance can be appropriate when you need more time to think and process, time constraints demand a delay, or the risk of confrontation is not worth what might be gained. However, avoidance is destructive if the other person perceives that you don't care enough to engage. By not dealing with the conflict, this style allows the conflict to simmer, potentially resulting in angry or negative outbursts.
- Compromising -- Compromise maintains the relationship and can take less time than other methods but resolutions may focus on demands rather than needs or goals. The compromise is not necessarily intended to make all parties happy or result in a decision that makes the most business sense, but rather ensures the decision is just and equitable, even if it causes a loss for both parties.
- Collaborating -- Collaborators address the conflict directly and in a way that expresses willingness for all parties to get what they need. However, collaboration takes time so if the relationship is not important it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution.

Focus on Interests (Needs), Not Positions (Wants)

Understanding people's interests is not a simple task because we tend to communicate our positions – things that are likely to be concrete and explicit. Try to recognize the difference between positions and interests to assist in creative problem-solving. Using open-ended questions that encourage a person to "tell their story" helps you better understand their interests.

- **Positions** are predetermined solutions or demands that people use to describe what they want to happen on a particular issue. For example, "I want the report."
- **Interests** define the problem and may be intangible, unexpressed or inconsistent. They are the motivation behind the position—the "why." Conflict usually exists when motivations/needs are not understood or mismatched in some way.

ACTIVE LISTENING	VALIDATION / EMPATHY
Active listening involves hearing more than the words of the speaker but taps into the deeper meaning, unspoken needs, and feelings conveyed. It is listening with all of your senses. Suspending judgment and being fully present with another person to understand his or her experience or point of view.	Validation is one of the most *transformative* communication skills in emotionally charged/reactive situations. **Validation** is about ***acknowledging*** our own as well as another person's emotions, thoughts, experiences, values, and beliefs as ***valid and legitimate.*** <u>Validating Statements:</u> *I am here to listen.* *I can see you are upset.* *How can I support you?* *That must have been difficult.*