

## Leaning into Hard Conversations



### I. Conversations I Need to Have:

Name:

Topic:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Body Language** affects how others see us and also governs how we feel about ourselves. Just as our minds can change our bodies, our bodies can also change our minds.

**Practice:** Take an open posture (standing with hands on hips) for two minutes/day to build your courage before engaging in a hard conversation.

### III. Three Fundamental Perspectives

#### **“I” Perspective:**

- Your perceptual home base. Notice body signals, both sensations and feelings that say something needs attention when you feel irritated, disappointed, angry, frustrated, hurt, etc. (quiver in stomach, queasiness)
- Interrogate your goals, needs and wants (head, heart and gut) in preparation for a hard conversation. Check in with yourself regarding how you are feeling. Sometimes feelings are hard to find, but this work will be very helpful to you in the conversation. Make your subjectivity known to others.
- Use I statements: Instead of *“You don’t understand what you’re talking about.”* Say: *“I don’t understand what you are saying.”*
- Use tentative language: *“I’m wondering how you view what happened in the meeting.”*

#### **“You” Perspective:**

View the situation from others’ perspective; see through their eyes and point of view. Imagine how it feels for them. This is the world according to them and requires being able to step in their shoes. (Empathy)

How?

- Drop your subjectivity and listen with Openness
- Listen underneath words for feelings, paraphrase and check that you heard it correctly. *“Is this what you meant?”*
- Validate *“I can now see why this is so important to you.”*
- Inquiry: Help the speaker get more in touch with what they mean.
- Build presence through mindfulness practices

#### **“It” Perspective:**

- Objective point of view. See yourself and them from above or as if are a neutral bystander observing. Move attention to witness.
- See without bias
- Notice what is going on. Are you too loud too soft, talking too much.
- This perspective is helpful when you take things too personally or when there are strong emotions.
- Done well you can describe the situation with detachment and see what works for both parties to reach win/win.
- This perspective gives you options and helps you see your part in the problem.

#### **IV. Open-ended Questions:**

- What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean to you?
- Can you explain how you arrived at your thinking?
- What's your perspective on \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why is this important to you? Say more about why you feel so strongly.
- What do you think should be done? Why do you think so?
- How can we move forward? How can we make this work?
- What could get in our way?
- What could we do to improve our process for handling future disagreements?  
What about for encouraging better dialogue?

#### **V. "As if" Stance**

A mental tool to help you to self regulate in difficult moments. It can apply to a state of mind you want in this moment ("As if I am very calm and confident right now")

Instead of being irritated, anxious, angry, etc. you can change your mood and your thoughts "as if" you were calm, confident and relaxed. You trick your mind into being more helpful, and change your emotional state, even in the midst of a very hard conversation. For example, "Who's the calmest person you know? If you were him or her what would you do and say?" "How would you behave?"

It is deceptively simple. Your body can change your mind and your mind can change your body. Give it a try.