Women Leading Locally



NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

PRESENTER: **ANNE-MARIE CADE** Organisation Name: BE HAPPIER TOGETHER

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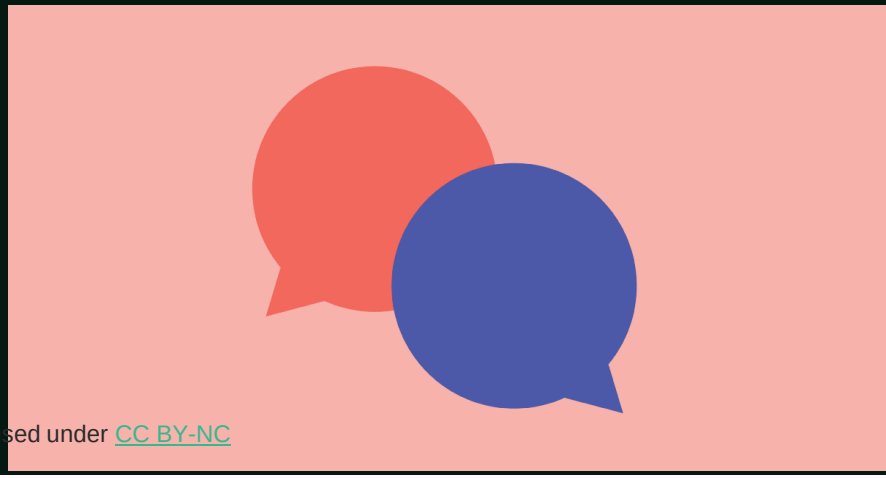
THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH COMMUNICATION IS THE ILLUSION THAT IT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

-GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



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Who am I?

- Lawyer, Mediator, Conflict Coach
- Deputy Mayor
- Mediator of the the Year 2023
- Thought leader and innovator
- Top 50 Professional & Career Women Global Awards 2023 – Global Economic Forum awards – Leadership in the field of law
- Churchill Fellow

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MY PASSION FOR THIS FIELD:

As a community we seem to be more polorised, we need to –

- Understand one another better
- Hold rich dialogue not toxic debates
- Have councillors/MPs who lead by example
- Cooperate towards joint solutions

Three key influences on culture:

- Safety
- Vulnerability
- Direction/Purpose

- Refer to The Culture Code – David Coyle

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More studies on culture

With Trust - people feel safe and appreciate that you have good intentions, that you will not cause them harm, that they can be vulnerable and admit to mistakes.

No Trust –people don't ask for help, hide mistakes and retaliate, constructive conversations are stifled.

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CONSEQUENCES OF NOT HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION:

- feelings of anger
- we become more sure that we are right
  and that the other person is wrong
- we get entrenched in our own positions

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Ted X Talk - video

The Secret To Getting Along is Easier Than You Think | Gabrielle Hartley

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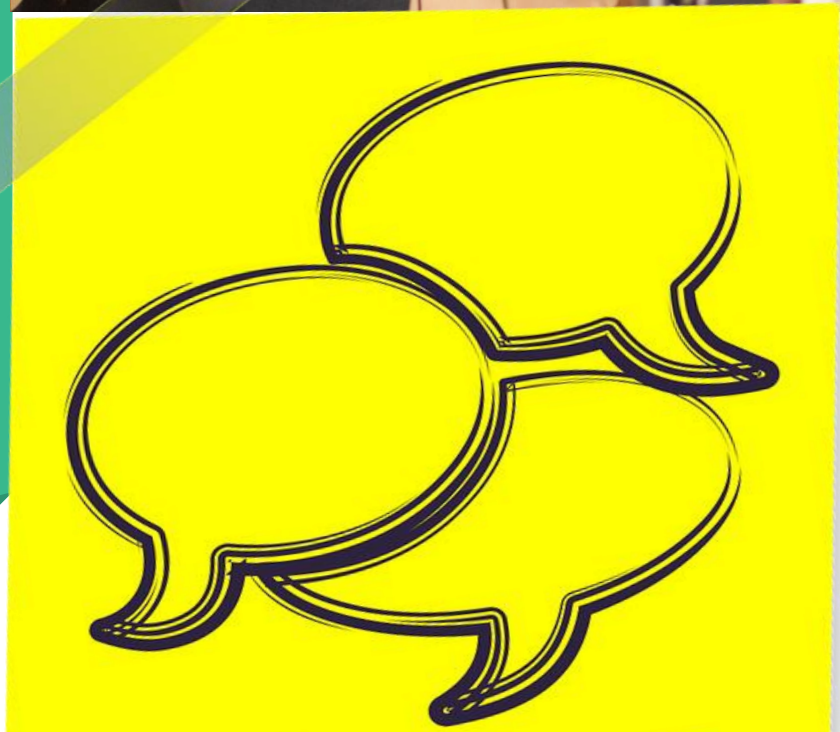
EXAMPLES OF DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS:

- saying no
- discussing an issue that is challenging
- confronting disrespectful behaviour
- dealing with problematic behaviour
- making an apology

Why do we find it hard to have these conversations:

- we feel vulnerable
- our self esteem is affected
- the outcome is uncertain
- there are issues at stake
- fear of consequences





Our personal interactions – what's at play?

- Prefrontal Cortex gets disengaged
- Extremities primed – Let’s fight, Testosterone
- Amygdala hijack - **cortisol**
- Flight, flight, freeze, fawn



Our personal interactions – what's at play?

- Bad gut feelings – meanings –stories drawn from the past,
- Thoughts – put into words, giver meaning to feeling
- Judgement – I can’t trust you
- Build blockages to other’s views



Humans make internal representations about an event.

- When there is trust, no fear –
- “Cup half full” approach - Seratonin, Dopamine
- Prefrontal cortex engaged - oxytocin



THE HUMAN BRAIN OPERATES IN 2 MODES - CONSCIOUS AND NON-CONSCIOUS.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION - PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX - RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGH LEVEL THINKING.

LIMBIC SYSTEM - PURPOSE IS TO KEEP US ALIVE

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CONFLICT IS A GOOD THING.

DISAGREEMENT IS A GOOD THING

Conflict done well enables rigorous discussion, the birth of new ideas and leads to collaboration.

HIGH CONFLICT



- destructive
- us v them
- our brains behave differently
- make mistakes
- conflict takes on a life of its own
- react rather than respond.

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WHEN BRAIN SENSES A THREAT- FIGHT, FLIGHT& FREEZE.

NOT HELPFUL - WE REACT AND THAT'S WHEN THERE IS CONFLICT.

COMMUNICATION IS –



- 7% words
- 38% tonality
- 55% body language

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TO COMMUNICATE BETTER WE NEED TO BUILD RAPPORT AND CREDIBILITY

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SKILL BUILDING:

-facts don't solve fights
-listening neutralizes the conflict
-pausing the voice in your own head
-avoid invalidating
-validate instead
-ask open ended questions

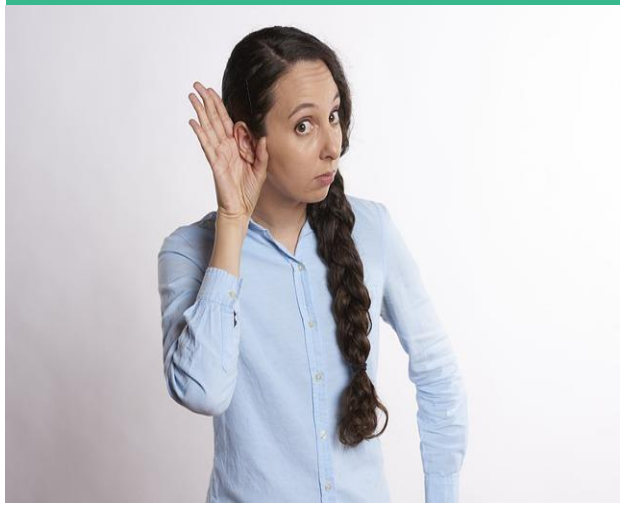
OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS-

- what do you need? where to from here?
- what do we need to figure out?
- what do I need to understand?
- I want to understand how you got here
- tell me more



ACTIVE LISTENING:

- pay attention
- listen with your eyes & heart
- don't think of response
- search for meaning in body language
- loop them



LOOPING: A SPECIAL KIND OF LISTENING

- listen to understand, don't judge,
- reflect back to them in your own words what you heard them say
- check with them if you got it right
- loop again - say tell me more



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PAY ATTENTION TO RED FLAG WORDS THEY USE:

- this signals that there is more to the conversation

- check the understory



ASK QUESTIONS TO GET TO THEIR MOTIVES

- why is this important to you?
- what do you want to understand about the other side?
- how has this conflict affected your life?
- what is you woke up tomorrow and the problem was solved?



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WIDEN THE LENS

- What is dividing us on this issue?
- Where do you feel torn?
- Is there any part of the otherside”s position that makes sense to use?



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Transforming the interactions

Creating the magic



Acknowledge

Confirm

Clarify

REMEMBER

- avoid getting drawn into the fight - go to the balcony or take a break
- role play hard conversations
- set guardrails in place
- magic ratio 3:1



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DEALING WITH CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURS:

- stay in good conflict in your head
- resist the urge to demonize them
- listen to try and understand
- propose a solution
- ask questions with curiosity
- reflect back to them

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION-

- do your preparation
- gather information around their perspective
- build rapport
- show interest in their concerns
- if unsure say you don't know.



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SOCIAL MEDIA



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We build trust through our interactions
When a person is validated, they feel heard and connected

2

Acknowledge, Confirm, Clarify

1

3

A culture is as strong as the prevailing trust
Understand how we are wired
Shift from red to green
Engage effectively

4

Practice, Implement, Review, Learn

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