

Leading Tough Conversations

Overview

Tough conversations are all about emotion.

When your emotions are triggered, your ability to think and communicate clearly is compromised. In order to make progress in a tough conversation, you have to acknowledge and address people's emotion-based concerns. "SCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others" (Rock, David. http://www.your-brain-at-work.com/files/NLJ_SCARFUS.pdf), says that people's negative emotional reactions are often triggered by trying to reduce threat in one or more of five different domains: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness.

Facilitation is...

- Activity-based
Planned discussion activities provide structure, and help make people feel safe to talk about high-stakes or emotionally-charged subject.
- Respectful of different modes of participation
Some people are verbally expressive off the cuff; some people need think time. Some people will talk in front of anyone; some people have heightened awareness of any power differentials in the room. Discussion activities allow for participation across the board.
- Directed, but not directly persuasive
You may know what you want people to come away with – you can have an end result in mind – but you have to let people get there on their own. If that isn't happening, think again about your end result.

Facilitation Tools and Activities

American Society for Training and Development. *10 Steps to Successful Facilitation*. (ASTD Press, 2008; 978-1562865382)

Community Tool Box – Chapter 16, Section 4: "Techniques for Leading Group Discussions." (Univ. of Kansas, KU Work Group for Community Health and Development;
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/group-discussions/main>)

Kaner, Sam. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. (Jossey-Bass, 2014; 978-1118404959)

Patterson, Kerry et al. *Crucial Accountability: Tools for Resolving Violated Expectations, Broken Commitments and Bad Behavior*. (McGraw Hill, 2013; 978-0071829311)

Thayer-Hart, Nancy, ed. *Facilitator Tool Kit: A Guide for Helping Groups Get Results*. (Univ. of Wisconsin, Office of Quality Improvement, 2007;
<http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourceibrary/uploads/resources/Facilitator%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>)