

# Why are Difficult Conversations Difficult?

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More than an  
exchange of  
words



Treat others as you would like to be treated?

NO!

Treat others as THEY would like to be treated

(and remember communication is about information received not information given)



# Reactions, Blocks and Barriers

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**Empathy** – we don't like being 'unkind'

**Shoot the messenger**

**Anger** in response

**Guilt** about response to conversation

**Denial** – risk of 'folie a deux'

**Ulterior motive** – risk it jeopardizes gains from relationship

**Energy draining** – takes psychical and emotional energy. Our default is to preserve energy

**Early attachments** – if fragile can't survive a row?

**Modality** – face to face, telephone, virtual, text, letter

**Euphemisms** – soften or dilute?

**Delegation** – appropriate or cowardice?

**Psychic blueprints** – did childhood difficult conversations -> violence?

**Takes two** – to have a conversation. Some people are able to make it hard to address some issues



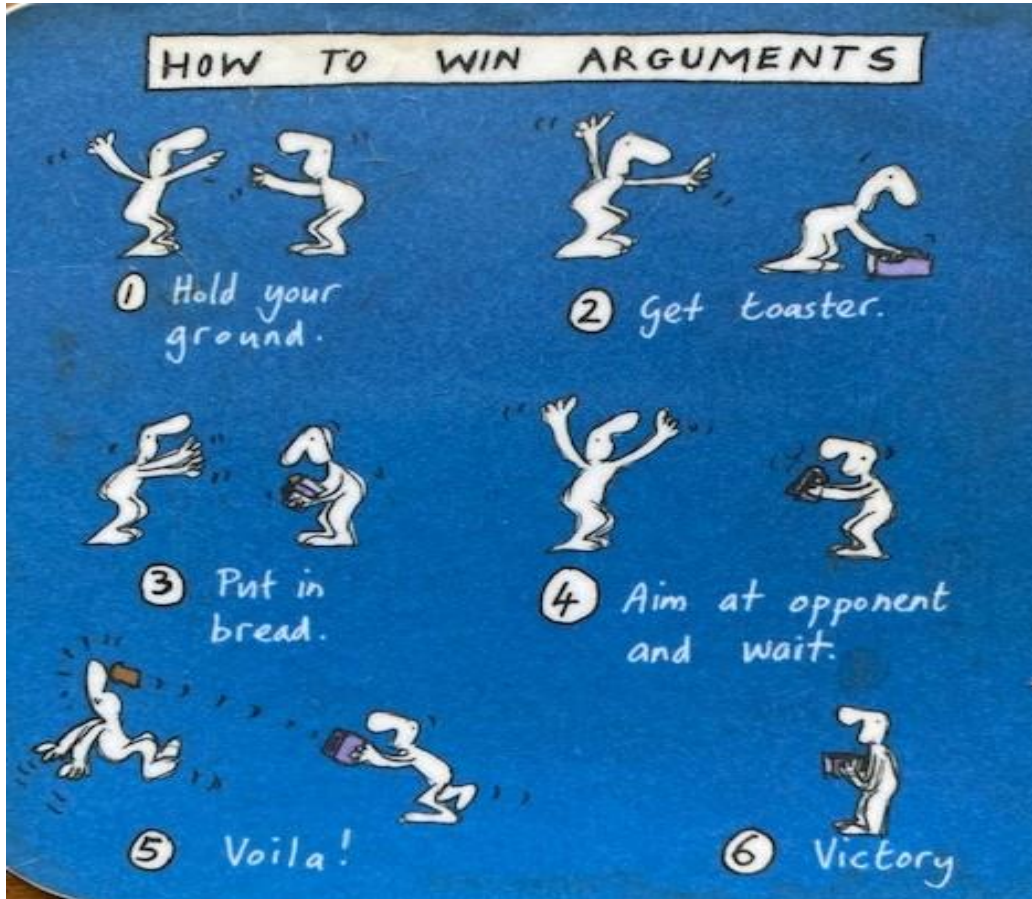
# Difficult Conversations

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PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING SERVICE

# What its not about ...



**Less ego please!**

# This session will..

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- Give you time to journal and reflect on a conversation you might need to have
- Equip you with a model of how to prepare for and have a tricky conversation
- Time to practice the process with feedback
- Have a plenary to discuss how it went

# Step 1. Imagine!

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**Imagine the conversation  
and journal your response  
to...**

- **What do I want from it?**
- **What do I want for myself?**
- **For the other person?**
- **For the relationship between us?**
- **How will I behave if that is what I really want?**





## Step 2.

Plan opening statement and write it down (3 mins)

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Be brief and to the point. It has 4 elements:

- ✓ **Name the issue** ( e.g. you will need to increase your speed in doing x procedure)
- ✓ **Select a specific instance** (e.g. the last time ....)
- ✓ **Describe your emotions** (e.g. I feel worried...)
- ✓ **Clarify what is at stake** (e.g. this will be a problem when you qualify)
- ✓ **Offer something different** (e.g. If I do xxx differently might that better support you?)

## Step 3.

# The conversation: Talk and Listen/Hear...

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- **Say your statement** *keep your tone low and soft, volume down, listen and relax!*
- **Notice if a possible battle of wills is beginning and step out.** ‘this is hard...lets find a way forward...’
- **Get back to the shared goal.** Find out what they want, there may be new information here.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for time out.** Maybe a loo break?
- **You hear something you don't like,** lean back, be curious and ask for more information ‘tell me more..’

# The conversation: continue....

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- **Express your feelings** without venting AND ask the person to do the same
- **When you say something you believe in and to you, its important, explore the other's response to it.** (typically we don't) allow their feelings to emerge, it enables common ground to materialise.
- **The other person clams up, draw attention to it, express interest in their views.** 'you have gone quiet, perhaps you can say where you are now?'
- **At the end** – check in about their feelings and possibly briefly summarise the changes you will both make

# The conversation: Practice in breakout rooms

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- Three in a room, the third is the observer. 7 mins each pair, 2 mins for feedback, **derole** before each new pair starts and at the end.
- Agree who goes first and emphasise confidentiality
- Get in to role – the person asking for the conversation, the other and the observer
- The Dentist having the conversation briefly describes the situation for the other to take on the role and begins.
- The conversation lasts for 7 minutes.
- The listener says how they experienced it and the observer gives a **useful** comment.

**Be Kind!!**

# Step 4. Review

- How did you do?
- How did they leave the meeting?
- At what point in the meeting did they become engaged? What were the signs?
- Is there unfinished business?
- What next?

You can always meet again... and remember to go back to Step 1.



# Thank you!

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