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Dreaded Conversations

Effectively Communicating Difficult News

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Communicating Well to Reduce the *NEED* for Dreaded Conversations

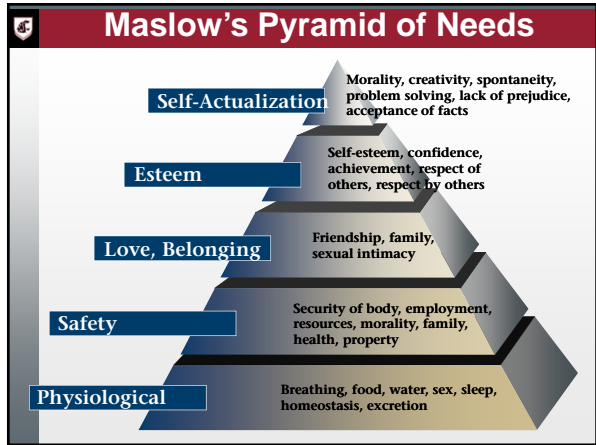
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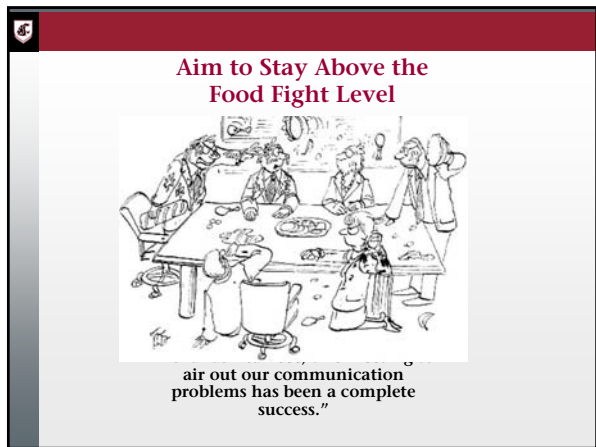
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Part One: Communicating Well





Listen Well

“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.”

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD
(author and storyteller)

Communication’s 2 to 1 Ratio

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”

Epictetus
(Greek philosopher)

The Numbers of Meaning

In communication about feelings and attitudes, we receive our meaning:

- 55% based on what we see
- 38% based on how it sounds (tone, volume, and speed)
- 7% based on the actual words that are spoken

Albert Mehrabian, UCLA professor

Communication Tips

What have you learned from good communicators?

What have you learned from your own good communication?




Be an Active Communicator.

- Hear the Words.
- Notice the Non-verbal Communication.
- Re-frame and Re-peat:
 - In your own words, make sure that the message you received is the message that the sender intended

Speak from the Heart

- Hear and understand me.
- Even if you disagree, don't make me wrong.
- Acknowledge the greatness within me.
- Remember to look for my loving *intention*.
- Tell me the truth with compassion.

Hylar Bracey, *Managing from the Heart*



Consider Different Possibilities

“How Fascinating!”

- “Tell me more about that . . . “
- Fix the problem. Don’t fix the blame.

Remember Rule #6.

- Set yourself and the situation in a larger setting.
- Where is the other person coming from?

• From *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*, Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander

**Part Two:
The Difficult
Conversations**

Even when we are communicating well, there are certain conversations we just don't want to have. Please share examples.

Elements of a Difficult Conversation

- Content
- Relationship
- Process

Content

What do you need to say?

Make a list.
Less is more—as long as it's enough.
Keep asking yourself, "What's most important?"

Relationship

Who are you at work?

- You, the very fine person
- You, the job title

Relationship

How do you balance YOU and YOU when they are in conflict?

- What message do you want to deliver?
- What message does the institution need to deliver, through you?
- Where do they overlap?

(C.K. Gunsalus, *The College Administrator's Survival Guide*)

Process

“We are not negotiating with our enemy—we are trying to improve our organization.”

Robert J. Spitzer, *The Spirit of Leadership: Optimizing Creativity and Change in Organizations*

Process

Focus on:

- the behavior, not the person
- a description, not an evaluation
- sharing information, not giving advice
- usefulness to the recipient, not satisfaction for you
- the most important information, not everything you'd like to share

A structure for difficult conversations

- 1) Observe without evaluation.
- 2) State your feeling, being careful not to substitute thinking for feeling.
- 3) Express your need concretely.
- 4) Use clear, positive action language to make request.

“When your project report was late, I felt embarrassed and angry, because other people were waiting for that information. I need you to meet deadlines when I assign them—and tell me right away if there are problems.”

How Do You Feel Today?

Practice a Difficult Conversation

Pick a partner and practice, using the examples we're handing out.

"I saw . . ."	(Observe without evaluation.)
"I feel . . ."	(State your feeling, being careful not to substitute thinking for feeling.)
"I need . . ."	(Express your need concretely.)
"I request . . ."	(Use clear, positive action language to make request.)

Dreaded Conversation Practice Scenarios

#1 At yesterday's staff meeting, an employee rolled his eyes at you when you announced a new office policy that employees had to notify supervisors when they were making use of sick leave.

#2 Earlier today, an employee slammed her office door and could be overheard using profane language while talking loudly on her phone.

#3 An employee was late to work today. This employee has been late two or three times a week for the past month. Each week, you have met with the employee to clarify expectations.

#4 Yesterday, an employee sent out an email notice to the university community with incorrect deadline dates.


The Most Difficult Conversations

- Consult with experts first: Human Resources, the Attorneys-General, your supervisor.
- Prepare an outline, so you don't miss anything important.
- Be calm, clear, and straightforward.
- Allow the other person to express his or her emotions without being controlled by them.
- Create a firm conclusion to the conversation with next steps.

Good Communication is Everyone's Job



"Beasley, you're a good communicator, look down the table and make eye contact for me!"



Thank you!

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