

Difficult Conversations Chart

(Based on the book by Stone, Patton & Heen)

The “What Happened” Conversation

A Battle of Messages	A Learning Conversation
<p>Truth</p> <p>Assumption: I know all I need to know to understand what happened.</p>	<p>Assumption: Each of us is bringing different information and perceptions to the table; there are likely to be important things that each of us doesn't know.</p>
<p>Intentions</p> <p>Assumption: I know what they intended.</p> <p>Goal: Let them know what they did was wrong.</p>	<p>Assumption: I know what I intended, and the impact their actions had on me. I don't and I can't know what's in their head.</p> <p>Goal: Share the impact on me, and find out what they were thinking. Also find out what impact I'm having on them.</p>
<p>Blame</p> <p>Assumption: It's all their fault. (Or it's all my fault.)</p> <p>Goal: Get them to admit blame and take responsibility for making amends. (Or take all the responsibility and move on quickly.)</p>	<p>Assumption: We have probably both contributed to this mess.</p> <p>Goal: Understand the contribution system: how our actions interact to produce this result.</p>

The Feelings Conversations

A Battle of Messages	A Learning Conversation
<p>Assumption: Feelings are irrelevant and wouldn't be helpful to share. (Or, my feelings are their fault and they need to hear about them.)</p> <p>Goal: Avoid talking about feelings. (Or, let 'em have it!)</p>	<p>Assumption: Feelings are the heart of the situation. Feelings are usually complex. I may have to dig a bit to understand my feelings.</p> <p>Goal: Address feelings (mine and theirs) without judging, blaming or attributing negative intention. Acknowledge feelings before problem-solving.</p>

The Identity Conversation

A Battle of Messages	A Learning Conversation
<p>Assumption: I'm competent or incompetent, good or bad, lovable or unlovable. There is no in-between.</p> <p>Goal: Preserve my all-or-nothing self-image.</p>	<p>Assumption: There may be a lot at stake psychologically for both of us. Each of us is complex, neither of us is perfect.</p> <p>Goal: Understand the identity issues on the line for each of us. Build a more complex self-image to maintain my balance better.</p>