



Difficult Conversations



Difficult Conversations

Perspectives

Activity: Look at the image, what do you see? List as many things that come to your mind.



Image: Vercillo, K. (2012, October 30). Two faces or a vase? old or young lady? 10 simple but wonderful optical. Hub Pages.

Our perspective is our way of understanding and interpreting the world around us. Everyone has their own perspective. People can witness the same event, decision, or action but have very different feelings and understandings.

Some people see a man playing a saxophone, some people see a woman, some people see something entirely different. All perceptions of this image are correct. Although people are looking at the exact same image, their perception of what they see will differ.

It is important to consider other people's perceptions when there is conflict. Putting yourself in someone else's shoes can help you understand their point of view, connect with them easier, and reach resolution successfully.

Sometimes people jump to conclusions. They perceive an action or event to be disrespectful and feel hurt. When we jump to conclusions, we are forming beliefs about something without having all the information. Always try to approach situations with an open mind.

Conflict and Difficult Conversations

Difficult conversations can be challenging. They can be uncomfortable and a source of anxiety for the involved parties. Because difficult conversations are just that – difficult – people tend to avoid them. This only prolongs the conflict and the associated negative feelings and prevents any growth, improvement, or resolution from occurring. If people do not know how their behaviour could improve, they will never change.

Conflict is a healthy, natural and necessary aspect of our lives. Having different minds working together result in innovative ideas, better solutions, and stronger relationships.

With different ideas and perspectives comes conflict – not everyone is going to agree or see things the same way. Having the skills and determination to navigate difficult conversations is a vital aspect for successful relationships and teamwork.

Resistance - Why, What, How



Why are people resistant?

- Prejudice/bias
- Stubbornness
- Sensitivity/hurt
- Differences in perceptions/values
- Competition for scarce resources
- Misunderstanding
- Unfulfilled expectation
- Fear of getting feedback

How are people resistant?

- Rude comments or behaviour
- Refusing to follow instructions
- Attacks
- Aggression (from eye-rolls to threats)
- Denial of the problem
- Refusal to recognize responsibility
- Deny credibility of the messaging
- Attack credibility of the messenger
- Slander
- Foot-dragging

What Customers Need

Customers need:

- To feel valued
- To feel appreciated
- Personalized approach
- To know you care

Keep this in mind when supporting guests. Presenting your authentic self shows that you care and create stronger relationships.

One conversation can change everything. If you do not talk to people about the issue, nothing will change. All it takes is one conversation to make a difference and rectify most situations.

Communication Model



Move towards conflict: Because difficult conversations are just that – difficult – people tend to avoid them which is incredibly problematic. Conflict is a healthy, natural and necessary aspect of our lives. Without conflict, problems hide everywhere, tensions grow, things can build up or get worse. Nothing will improve unless we address the issue.



Listen: Listening is the most important crucial aspect when resolving conflict. Often our desire in a difficult situation is just to be heard and acknowledged. Once the person has a chance to voice their opinion and be acknowledged, the emotional charge is usually reduced by up to 75 per cent. Sometimes people just need to vent. Be an active listener, do not interrupt, and let there be silences, if necessary. Silence provides space for people to process what they're going through and share more information.



Show empathy: Empathy is the acknowledgement of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of the other person. Empathy should be sincere and conveyed through body language, tone, and words. To show empathy for customers, consider the following phrases: "I understand..."; "I'm sorry..."; "I can appreciate..."



Recap the situation: Paraphrasing is a skill that is critical to your efforts to resolve conflict. It helps clarify what is being said by all parties involved in the issue. It also ensures you have the correct information and are on the same page.



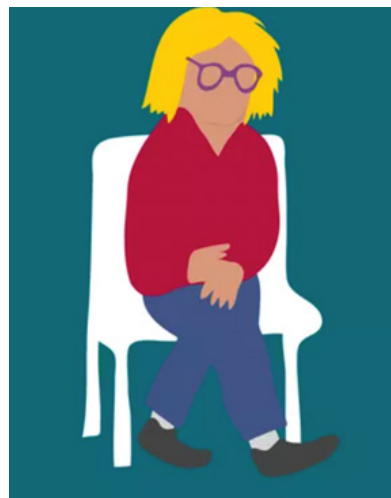
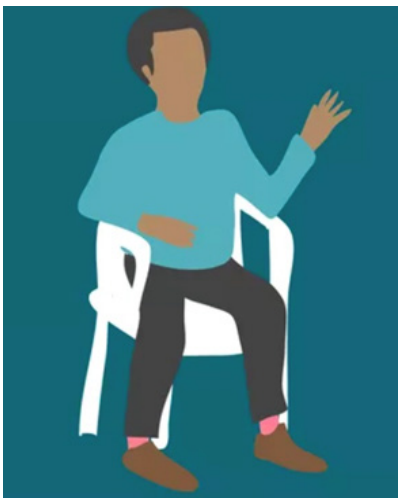
Take action and present a solution: Along with providing a solution, explain your next steps. If you do not have the authority to offer a solution, inform the party and let them know that you will be escalating the situation to a person who does have authority. If the conflict is with colleagues, come up with a solution together.



Follow up: Check in with the individuals involved, and ensure all parties are following through on their role in resolving the situation. If a guest had an issue, follow up with them to ensure that it has been addressed.

Body Language

Activity: You are in a meeting and the two people in the pictures are sitting across from you. How do you think they are feeling? What do you think their role is?



Most of our face-to-face communication is through body language. When we are delivering any message, only 7 per cent comes through in our words. Tone of voice and non-verbal body language deliver the rest.

The face and the eyes are the most expressive means of body communication. Body language must be in tune with your words and tone. Otherwise, you send a mixed, and often confusing message.

Tips

Active Listening

- Is called active because the listener has a definite responsibility.
- We are not just passively absorbing the words but actively trying to grasp the facts and feelings that are inherent in what we hear.
- Active listening must be firmly grounded in an attitude of respecting the speaker and the worth of their point of view.

Use "I" Language

- Look for points to agree upon and find common ground.
- Make "I" statements, not "You" statements, which sounds like blame.
- Say "Yes, I see your point..." or "I agree that..."

Stay Calm

- If emotions are elevated, we are less in control of ourselves. We may raise our voice, say things we later regret, and won't be in a space where we are listening to others.
- Lowering your voice is an effective de-escalation strategy.
- Do not take things personally. If there is an issue with a customer, remember that they do not even know you. They are only human and no one is perfect. Practice self-care.

Don't let disappointment out the door

- Your interaction with the customer maybe their first and last impression of your business. It will have an impact.
- The personal relationship, for the customer, is key to an overall positive experience
- Fix any problems before they are announced and shared on social media



Rachel Glover (she/her)
STEM Consulting
rachel.glover@stemconsulting.com
www.stemconsulting.com



training@tourismsask.com
www.tourismsaskatchewan.com
www.business.tourismsaskatchewan.com