

Over the years, we've taken deep dives into learning how to enter and be a part of a challenging or courageous conversation. We've read, taken classes, and practiced thousands of conversations over time. We've drawn from resources such as *Crucial Conversations* and *Fierce Conversations*, The Conscious Leadership Group, and researchers like Brené Brown, among many others. We hope this handout offers a way of thinking about and planning for a conversation.

### What is a courageous conversation?

A courageous conversation is a discussion that can feel uncomfortable but **aims to openly and respectfully share** in a way that **benefits the relationship. Blame is laid aside.** Blame is not your purpose. It is about **speaking the truth**, being **transparent** and **vulnerable**.

Doing some advanced pre-work for a conversation that you are anxious about can help ensure you've thought through the pieces. This worksheet is intended to help you jot down a few notes so you can prepare for the conversation that you want or need to have.

A few thoughts to keep in mind:

When we lead with our hearts, we can be open, vulnerable, direct, and come from a place of curiosity. Our conversations are more likely to land as we hope. Direct feedback is a gift. When we're curious about other perspectives, we can see from a variety of perspectives, which leads to learning and growth.



If you're being offered feedback, listen from a place of curiosity. What are they seeing that you may not be? How is your leadership landing on others? (*Everyone is a leader despite title or rank. You're the CEO of your life and how you show up, and the wake you leave behind, is fully your responsibility.*)

### Preparing for a conversation.

#### Step 1: Ask for permission.

Asking for permission creates safety for the other person. It's a show of respect. They may not be ready, or the timing may be off. If the person declines a conversation, ask for a time when they can talk.

**Jot down some thoughts on how you might ask for a conversation.** Here is an example:  
*"I have some thoughts/perspectives/assumptions/observations/feedback that I'd like to share with you. Are you open to me sharing a few thoughts about XX? Is this a good time?"*

**Step 2: Share the specific FACTS.**

*"The facts of the situation are..."* (these are what a video camera would capture)

**Step 3: Share Your Story, Feelings, and Responsibility**

<b>My Story</b> What is narrative (the story you're telling yourself) you're creating about the other person?	<b>My feelings</b> What are your feelings around this? Examples are angry, sad, scared, fearful, joyful.	<b>My Responsibility</b> How have you contributed to the problem?

**Craft a statement that outlines your story, your feelings, and how you may have contributed to the issue.**

*"The story I make up in my head about this is..."*

*"My feelings I have around this are..."(feelings can be numerous...examples are angry, sad, scared, fearful, joyful.)*

*"I recognize how I may have contributed to it. For this, I apologize."*

**Step 4: Tie to impact.**

**Get clear about why this is important.** *For example, “What’s at stake to gain or lose is...”*

*“This is IMPORTANT because...”*

**Step 5: Share what you would like to see happen next.**

*“I want or would like...”*

**Step 6: Stop and listen.**

As you listen, be fully present, allow the person to speak. No interrupting, no matter how triggered you may feel. After the person has spoken, move to creating a shared understanding and next steps.

**Step 7: Create shared understanding and next steps**

In this step, we’re seeking to develop a shared understanding of the issue and develop next steps. You want to be very clear about what success looks like, who will take what action when.

*“May we jot down some specific next steps?”*

**Step 8: Choose a date for follow up and check in.**

In this step, we’re simply following up and checking in to see how things are going, if there are further reflections, and the like.

When you follow up, here are some potential questions:

*“How are things going with XX?”*

*“What shifts are you noticing in yourself or others as we’ve made changes?”*

*“Is there anything that I can do to help or support you?”*

*“Thanks again for your hard work and effort.”*

### Your final step post conversation:

What went well?

What might you do differently next time?

Where were you triggered?

Any other insights?

**Another approach to courageous conversations: the 4 “I” Statements.** The I statement leads to an exploratory conversation, followed by requests and agreements.

1. **When you...** (A factual description of the other person’s behavior or action)
2. **I feel/felt...** (The feeling you’ve experienced as a result of the behavior or action)
3. **Because...** (The consequences of the behavior or action)
4. **I want...** (Your own want in this situation)

### Being on the receiving end of feedback

Hearing feedback can be hard! Our minds race, emotions are heightened, and we may be triggered and want to interrupt or deflect blame. The more curious we can get, the better we’ll become at hearing the other person’s point of view and be able to assess the validity. Instead of discounting what is being shared with you out of the gate, consider if there is any aspect that may be true. You may not know your actions are landing on others in a particular way. Take time to get curious rather than reactive.

Here are some steps to take when someone approaches you (after you’ve agreed to hear the feedback).

1. “What I hear you saying is...” (Reflect or paraphrase without interpretation)
2. “Did I get that RIGHT?” (If not, reflect again)
3. “Is there MORE?” (Ask with curiosity)
4. “Have you said everything you have to say, and expressed your emotions around it?” (If yes, move on. If not, go back to “Is there more?”)
5. Is there a NEXT ACTION step? (If yes, who will do what by when?)
6. When are we going to FOLLOW UP?
7. Say “Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts/feedback/perspective.”

**ADISA'S AREAS OF FOCUS****Team Development**

As certified master team coaches, our focus on building exceptional teams is rooted in research and grounded by assessments. Armed with data about what's working and what's getting in a team's way, we measurably improve effectiveness that drives business results while also increasing individual member satisfaction. Common topics are shared goals and purpose, norms, mutual accountability, decision-making, and collaboration and cohesion. Engagements are highly customized and can begin at any point in a team's lifecycle from its formation to its transformation.

**Strategic Volunteer Engagement**

We help leaders think strategically about how to leverage the power of volunteers to meet the organization's mission more efficiently and effectively. We look at how volunteers are currently engaged, where the organization is heading, and partner with leadership to intentionally align volunteers to achieve desired goals. We use assessments and a variety of approaches to understand the operating environment and offer recommendations, training, planning and implementation tools to ensure optimal volunteer impact, empowering staff and volunteers at every level.

**Leadership Coaching**

Through a process of self-discovery, we work with leaders who seeking to amplify their impact and bring out the best in themselves and their teams. Clients practice new ways of "being" as they examine assumptions, identify roadblocks, explore habits, and identify beliefs that may be getting in their way to achieving the results they desire. The outcome is greater self-awareness and clarity, expanded perspective, and increased capacity to influence and drive results, taking performance to a new and sustainable level.

**Mentoring & Thought Partnership**

With a blend of inquiry and expert counsel, we guide people through a learning journey that prepares them for action that can be immediately implemented. We open doors, make connections, and share tools and experiences to support the mentee in their growth.

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We're not a typical recruiting firm. We are uniquely positioned to find your next chief executive based on our extensive network of relationships nationwide, combined with our C-suite experience, and our leadership development expertise. We are focused on making a match that sticks, and our approach ensures that we are trusted by candidates and the clients who rely on us.

**Strategic Visioning and Planning**

We partner with organizations to gain clarity about the problem they are seeking to solve and the impact they wish to make in society. With thoughtful attention to design, we help organizations make big strategic shifts to realign their people and operations to maximize success.