

3 TIPS FOR BRAVE, HONEST CONVERSATIONS™

Some conversations are hard to have. Fear and discomfort build in your body and you avoid and procrastinate or pretend everything is fine. Sometimes you rush in with urgency, wanting to smooth things over, fix them, and make them better. Sometimes you go to battle stations, positioning the conversation so you have a higher chance of being on the “winning” side.

None of this works. Instead, it usually makes a hard conversation harder; more divided, polarized, and disconnected from others.

Try these 3 tips for Brave, Honest Conversations™ to find solutions to the problems you face in ways that bring people together.



1

GATHER YOUR COURAGE

It's scary to talk about things that are emotional, intense or full of conflict. **Being brave doesn't mean you need to be fearless. Fearless is a myth. No one is fearless.** We are all scared, nervous and fearful at different times about different things. Fear keeps us alive, serves as a warning system, urges us forward to more or stalls us out. Brave is acknowledging and owning and then feeling the fear – and stepping up and forward anyway.

My colleague Rick Tamlyn always asks “What are you committed to more than your fear?” As a leader you need to know that – how to do you want to show up in your world and what impact are you trying to create? Knowing these things and being deeply committed holds you courageous when you need to step forward. You don't need to be brave for everything, but when it's called for it matters that you are committed to it 100%.

Gathering your courage to have a brave, honest conversation is an act of believing in possibility; that things might work out, that you are more able than you thought. **The act of believing is far more courageous than waiting until you can see success.** It might not go perfect, but doing nothing means it can only get worse. The learning is in the trying and not succeeding, and in getting up and beginning again.



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“When we show up with courage, compassion and integrity the possibilities are endless. The world needs more leaders willing to be brave, messy and beautiful. Dare to make a lasting difference.”



2

EMBRACE THE EMOTION

Every time you have a Brave, Honest Conversation it is likely there will be emotion. When you talk about the issues that really matter, things can get heated. **Heightened emotion means you are getting close to the heart of an issue.**

It's a mistake to think that because someone is crying or angry or fearful that you can acknowledge that feeling and then move on. What you really want to do is step into the emotion and go deeper, and

stay, rather than merely holding space for the emotion to be present. Ask questions to discover the meaning being made from the feelings, or the stories that are being created based on feeling or assumption. The moment you want to rush on or avoid the situation is probably the moment you should resist that urge and STAY with the emotion that is being generated. **Think of emotion as a path to meaning and knowledge and uncover the map behind the feeling.**



3

STAND FOR SOMETHING

I've never been in a Brave, Honest Conversation where I didn't hear something I didn't agree with. They are rarely love-ins where everyone agrees. **In fact, if everyone is agreeing I'd take that as a warning sign that you aren't really having a Brave, Honest Conversation.** Conversations aren't about winning or being right, or getting agreement. They are about creating an openhearted space for tough conversations so you can move forward together with others.

Don't stand for your perspective, view or side of the issue. Instead take a stand for possibility, inclusion, respect, curiosity or compassion. **Stand for the relationship,**

or for the possibility you can live side by side with a neighbor who thinks differently than you.

You need to bring everything in and welcome it to the conversation. Don't rush to finding clarity on whether you agree or disagree with someone. **Who cares if you agree? That isn't the point.** Instead, be willing to say, *"Thanks for saying what you really feel. Thanks for sharing your concerns or the impact this issue has on you."*

Then keep talking, exploring and understanding so you can find alignment on values or shared hopes. Put your energy on those things and you will find a way forward. There is nothing we can't solve if we talk about it together.



**COURAGEOUS
LEADERSHIP
PROJECT**

DARE TO MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE