

Section Five Supplement for ebook Purchasers

ACCELERATE

High Leverage
Leadership
for Today's
World

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AND DWIGHT FRINDT

Section Five Supplement for ebook Purchasers

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Section Five:
Practical
Applications—
Conversational
Examples & Tools

In this section, we explore the “how to” of applying the Operating Principles and Essential Notions. We have combed through feedback from our clients regarding their most pressing concerns and we have chosen a few common leadership challenges and provided you with an approach that applies the ideas and practices in this book.

Always important and yet often elusive, the ability to address the kinds of basic issues presented here is rapidly becoming even more essential for leaders. As the pace of change quickens and the level of uncertainty rises, the capacity to raise and resolve issues productively and quickly and have regular, reliable access to a variety of perspectives and interpretations will make the difference between success and failure.

Comfort with identifying and clearing upsets, first in yourself and then in others, will determine whether you are able to lead collaboratively based on a shared Yonder Star or must resort to the traditional command and control mindset. Learning to listen in a way that keeps you present and connected while continuing to forward the action will give you a much clearer view of what is going on around you. In addition, it will facilitate the free flow of information and allow you and your team to be much more present and in touch as the new rules of the game are created and evolve.

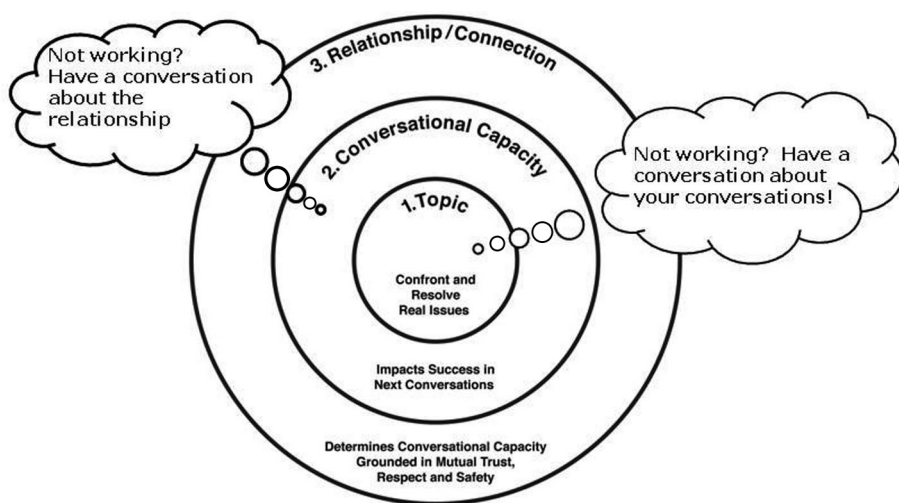
As you read through each of these conversational examples, challenge yourself to choose a person in your life for whom this type of conversation is appropriate and work with it! For more support, check our Web site at www.2130partners.com for more tools and programs.

Practical Application #1:

The Three Levels
of Conversational
Impact as a
Diagnostic Tool

After working diligently to apply the Operating Principles and Essential Notions, are you still having trouble getting through some issues? Are there some people with whom it seems very difficult to establish an environment of mutual trust, respect and safety? Have you followed our advice when you or the other person is upset and stopped driving your agenda—and now you are wondering how you can ever get back to resolving the real issue? Most of the Practical Applications are examples of how to have productive conversations about certain topics or in specific situations. When those conversations still don't work, how can you know what level of conversation to have next?

Three Levels of Conversational Impact



In the Essential Notions—Section One we presented four key ideas about what happens in every conversation:

- The conversation leaves an impact at the level of topic, conversational capacity, and relationship.

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- The topic is resolved, stalled, or set back.
- Conversational capacities are enhanced, flat-lined, or decreased.
- Relationships are either built up or torn down.

Use the Three Levels of Conversational Impact as a diagnostic. If it isn't working at the level of topic resolution, stop talking about the topic and have a conversation about your conversations. If that doesn't work, have a conversation about your relationship. With that diagnosis, the next two applications address the "how to."

The success of these conversations is predicated on your ability and willingness to have a rigorous conversation with yourself—examine your own truths, be vulnerable, and be courageous.

Have a Conversation about Your Conversations— Building Capacities

Only when you are more committed to the success of a project or relationship than to your ego, getting credit, or being right will you be able to successfully build new collaborative capacities with another.

As you engage with others with your new knowledge, you will quickly discover that to increase the productivity of your daily interactions, rigorous, continuous practice is required. You must engage in challenging conversations to build conversational muscle. A key method to leverage your effectiveness is to learn to have a conversation with another about your conversations. In that exercise, treat your interactions themselves as fair game and fertile ground for your mutual learning and development. This is *not* a conversation for resolving a particular issue or problem. The topic for discussion in these conversations is enhancing the productivity and effectiveness of your interactions with each other. It is a method for building conversational

The Three Levels of Conversational Impact as a Diagnostic Tool

capacity and relationship. Your conversations—including their successes and failures—are the primary focus.

Not every conversation hits the target of delivering maximum productivity while minimizing friction and waste. There is almost always room for improvement. By reviewing and working through the stumbling blocks in your conversations, you can usually significantly improve productivity. While you may find practice uncomfortable and sometimes discouraging, most learning and progress occurs from noticing and correcting small failures. Even physical trainers push you to muscle failure in your practice to build strength. If using this application doesn't work to restore mutual trust, respect, and safety, then perhaps "having a conversation about our relationship" is the next level for you to address.

The Operating Principles to consider while working through this application include:

Principle #1: Be Present, Stay in the Game

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow to Understand

Principle #3: Take Myself Lightly

Principle #6: Confront and Deal with Real Issues

Follow the outline of how to proceed through a conversation about your conversations, including preparation before your conversation and key points to consider during the conversation:

Outline: Have a Conversation about Your Conversations

Building Conversational Capacities

Before the Conversation:

1. Identify a specific person with whom you are committed to having even more productive interactions. This could be a close personal acquaintance or a colleague, employee, boss, client, or vendor who is important to you, to the success of your work, or to producing desired project outcomes.
2. Clarify, for yourself, the Yonder Star you believe you share with the other person. If in doubt, invent one and discuss it as part of the conversation. (Examples: the success of a project, the ability to work together effectively, increased overall efficiencies or effectiveness in the team, etc.)
3. Identify your contribution to the current situation. Yes! You have a role! How is it that you could interact differently? Where have you been impeding the process?

Begin the Conversation:

1. Ask the other person if he or she would be willing to talk with you about how you two could be much more productive in your interactions. Use your own words; just be sure it comes across as an invitation! Some suggestions:
 - “John, would you be willing to have a conversation with me to explore how we might increase effectiveness in our work together?”
 - “John, that last conversation didn’t work that well for me, and I suspect it didn’t for you either. Can we talk about how we work together?”

2. Use “I” statements throughout!
3. Share your commitment to the relationship. If you are asking “What relationship?,” go back to steps 1 and 2 above under “Before the Conversation.” Here are some suggestions to help you get started:
 - “I am committed to having the kind of relationship with you that allows us to raise and resolve tough issues as efficiently as possible and where we are both treated with respect and dignity.”
 - “It is my intention to develop the kind of working relationship with you that allows us to move through tough stuff quickly—and respectfully.”
 - “I am committed to working in a collaborative manner with you, and I’d like to talk about how we can do that more effectively.”
 - “I’m working on developing my leadership skills and the productivity of my conversations. Our conversations about XYZ project are a good place for me to practice, given our mutual responsibility for the outcomes.”
 - “Our working relationship is an example to all of our direct reports, and I am committed to practicing what I advocate. There has got to be a way for us to get through tough issues without so much blood!”
4. Go first with sharing about your contribution to the current condition of your conversations and relationship. Share your thoughts about how you can improve your own participation. Some suggestions:

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- “I know that I get impatient sometimes and check out...for our next conversation about XYZ project I will schedule it in advance and block the time slot we need.”
 - “I know that I get upset easily when I feel surprised by project progress issues, and that shuts down the conversation. I know that’s my thing to work on, and I am going to work on having my surprised feeling be a cue for me to breathe and get present and curious.”
 - If appropriate, apologize for any impact or unintended consequences that may have occurred as a result of your past behavior.
5. Ask the other person how he or she thinks you could be more effective together.
- “How could our conversations be more productive from your perspective?”
 - “What could I do differently?”
 - “What changes would you be willing to make?”
6. Be quiet, focus, and listen!
7. Make mutual commitments about how to have the next conversation about the issues or projects.

After the Conversation:

Check in to review, acknowledge improvement or breakdowns, and refresh as needed.

Worksheet: Have a Conversation About Your Conversations

1. Identify a specific person with whom you are committed to having even more productive interactions.

2. Clarify the Yonder Star you believe you share with the other person.

3. Identify your own contribution to the current situation. Where do you impede progress? Do you check out, dismiss, or get impatient? Are you unavailable? Preoccupied? Do you get upset easily?

4. What can you do differently? *Hint: Check all of the Operating Principles.*

5. Engage in the conversation, keep what works, make some changes for increased effectiveness, and celebrate what works!

Have a Conversation about Your Relationship— Building Mutual Trust, Respect, and Safety

We have repeatedly stressed the importance of creating an environment of mutual trust, respect, and safety so that the most productive and collaborative work can be accomplished—particularly in conditions of fear, resistance, and unrelenting change. All of the Operating Principles, when applied diligently, support this notion. Nevertheless, there are certain conversations that just don't seem to work no matter what Operating Principle you practice. It could be that you are applying them with the best of intentions on top of a relationship where mutual trust, respect, or safety is missing or must be mended or revived. It is critical to continually build and mend relationships when necessary so that when you really need support and collaboration, they are there to draw from.

The Operating Principles to consider while working through this application are:

Principle #1: Be Present, Stay in the Game

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow to Understand

Principle #3: Take Myself Lightly

Principle #8: Make It Safe *and* Productive

Principle #9: Be Responsible for What Gets Heard

Work through the following outline of how to proceed through a conversation about your relationship, including preparation work before your conversation and key points to consider during the conversation.

Outline: Have a Conversation about the Relationship

Building Mutual Trust, Respect and Safety

Before the Conversation:

1. Consider your relationship and the conversations you have had with the other person. What do you think is missing in the relationship? Is it mutual trust, respect, or safety?
2. What is missing for *you* in the relationship?
 - Do you feel safe to talk about whatever needs to be discussed?
 - Do you trust yourself to be able to be present, catch your unproductive emotions, and stay in the game?
 - Do you feel the other person respects your contribution?
3. What is missing in your regard for the other person?
 - Can you make it a safe environment for them to discuss what matters most? If not what is missing for you to be able to offer yourself that way?
 - Do you feel they share the same goal, values, or urgency?
4. What is the impact of your current relationship status? On you, them, the team, the goal?
5. What could happen if nothing changes in your relationship?
6. Clarify, for yourself, the Yonder Star you believe you share with the other person. If in doubt, invent one and discuss it as part of the conversation (examples: the success of a project, the ability to work together effectively, increased overall efficiencies or effectiveness in the team, ripple affect or example to others around you).

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7. Identify your contribution to the current situation. Yes! You have a role! How is it that you could interact differently? Where have you been impeding the process?
8. What is an ideal outcome? If your conversation together alters the relationship significantly, what would be different?
9. Craft an opening statement that invites the other person into a conversation with you. Preparing your opening statement is intended to encourage you to be thoughtful and purposeful about it. See what negative emotions or old baggage comes up for you before going “live” with the other person. Don’t over choreograph it or try to anticipate what the other person might say and all of your possible responses! Be clear in your opening statement or opening question that your intention is to enhance the relationship. This is not an opportunity to whine about how you don’t feel safe or complain about their lack of cooperation!

Begin the Conversation:

1. Ask the other person if he or she would be willing to talk with you about how you two could be much more productive in your interactions and build the kind of relationship where even the toughest of issues can be raised and resolved. Use your own words; just be sure it comes across as an invitation! Some suggestions:
 - “Joan, I’d like to build a much more productive working relationship with you, and I have reflected on some things I could do differently...would you be willing to discuss/work on that with me?”
 - “Joan, our working relationship is a role model to all the people who work for us, and my intention is to build it to a really productive level. Could we have a conversation to

mend the fences/work through the issues that are getting in our way?"

2. Use 'I' statements throughout!
3. Share your commitment to the relationship and state what you see could be enhanced. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:
 - "I am committed to having the kind of relationship where it is safe to raise tough issues and have confidence that we will work through them respectfully."
 - "We used to have that and somewhere it went south."
 - "The safety in our relationship to just say what is there to say and to work things out is not there for me; is it for you?"
 - "What do we need to talk through or get past in order to restore a healthy working relationship?"
 - "I intend to model the kinds of productive working relationships that I expect of those who work for me, and to that end I really would like to sort out between us what is not working."
 - What happened—from your perspective—to get us off track?
 - What can we learn from that episode that will help us now?
 - Are there still misunderstandings from that situation that we could clear up to help us move forward?

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4. Be big and go first with Self-Generated Accountability. Where can you take ownership or responsibility for the gaps and misunderstandings—authentically? Use your own words!
 - “I can see that I have not been as forthcoming with information as I could be, and that has caused some issues between us.”
 - “I am sorry for any unproductive part I have played in our relationship; I’ve been in reaction mode for sure.”
 - “I haven’t been supportive or even seemed very interested in the ideas you bring forward in executive meetings, and I am sure that has contributed to the distance in our relationship.”
 - “I have felt more competitive with you than cooperative, and I can see the damage that has caused.”

5. Connect with a higher purpose for the relationship—what are the opportunities?
 - “The (mutual goal) is really important and I can see that a new, more respectful, collegial relationship between us would take our focus and emotional energy off you and me and direct it to the issues to tackle together.”
 - “If we are really going to accomplish “X,” it would be very helpful for us to find our way forward in our relationship because there are plenty of outside obstacles to work through together.”

6. What is next?
 - “Here are some things that I could do differently...and am willing to do differently”

- “What changes would you be willing to make?”
7. Make mutual commitments for follow-up and resolve what comes up next in the relationship. Anytime powerful people work together to accomplish big goals, there is a probability that relationship issues of mutual trust respect and safety come up. The idea isn't to avoid them; it is to be able to have confidence that you can talk about them and sort them out in a mutually satisfying manner.
- “In our executive meetings, if I have an issue with the way we are interacting, I will say ‘Can we chat briefly afterwards to clear up a few points?’ rather than attack during the meeting—that could be our cue to each other.”
 - “Let’s schedule lunch once a month to stay on top of how we are doing and catch any slips before a wall gets built up.”
 - “Let’s get together after our schedules of meetings and presentations this week to connect and adjust a bit.”

After the Conversation:

What went well? What did you learn for your next “relationship” conversation? Check in to review, acknowledge improvement or breakdowns, and refresh as needed.

Worksheet: Have a Conversation About the Relationship

Building Mutual Trust, Respect, and Safety

1. Identify the person with whom you are committed to having a more productive relationship.

2. Clarify the Yonder Star you believe you share with the other person.

3. Identify your own contribution to the current relationship situation.

4. What is an ideal outcome? If the relationship changes significantly after the conversation, what would be different?

5. What can you do differently? *Hint: Check all of the Operating Principles.*

6. Engage in the conversation, keep what works, make some changes for increased effectiveness and celebrate what works!

Practical Application #2:

Questions to
Explore Reality—
Curiosity versus
Interrogation

It's important to learn to ask questions in a way that causes new thought or reflection rather than defense or survival brain thinking. As a Practical Application of the Operating Principles, learn to ask questions of yourself, of another person, and of groups in a way that shines a light on current conditions and the gaps to close in order to experience real accomplishment. Here are some sample questions listed under a couple of scenarios to get you started. Notice which questions are repeated and add these to your generic question library!

While you are practicing asking questions keep these Operating Principles in mind:

Principle #1: Be Present, Stay in the Game

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow to Understand

Principle #3: Take Myself Lightly

Principle #4: Declare There Is Nothing Wrong or Broken *Here and Now*

Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Questions to Explore Reality

Example Situation: A Project is “Off-Track”

Exploring *my truths*, ask and answer these questions for yourself:

- What do I know? What don't I know?
- What would I like to learn more about or understand on a deeper level?
- What is my understanding of my role in the project to date?
- What do I see as my role moving forward?
- How critical is this issue on a scale of 1–10 in terms of importance? In terms of urgency?
- What are the consequences that I see? Opportunities?
- Where am I stuck in “It's just wrong”?
- What interpretations, conclusions, judgments, or decisions have I already made that might preclude me from being an effective contributor in collaborating for resolution?
- What will it cost me to give those up, listen newly, and “explore truths”?
- What is possible if I do?
- Am I willing to have the ultimate goal be more important than my preconceived conclusions, interpretations, decisions, and judgments?

Questions to Explore Reality—Curiosity versus Interrogation

Exploring *their truths*, ask these questions of another person:

- What are the issues from their perspective?
- How did the project get to this place?
- What has their understanding of their role been?
- How critical is this issue to them on a scale of 1–10 in terms of importance? In terms of urgency?
- What are the consequences that they see? Opportunities?
- What data points can they share about from their vantage point?
- How did they arrive at their conclusions, what is the background?
- What has changed, if anything?
- What can they offer as possible pathways or solutions?
- What are the most important considerations moving forward?
- What is missing for success – from their viewpoint?
- What do they see as their role moving forward?
- What other resources are required?

Exploring *our truths*, ask these questions to a group:

- What do we know? What don't we know?
- What *was* the ultimate goal of the project? Is that still valid?
- What is the current status of the project with respect to timetable, budget, and resources?
- What are the current internal/external conditions we are facing?
- Who is impacted by a change in status or progress?
- What are the consequences to the organization, client, or internal team if it remains on the current track?
- What ideas can be generated for how to close the gap between the original intention and the current projection? Who could help with that?
- What resources would be required to get the project back on track?
- What is currently missing? If we had that—could it work? What else?
- What other information would be useful for our decision-making?
- Who else could contribute to our understanding of the issues?
- Who else could contribute to our solution/option set?
- What questions are we avoiding?
- How do we define the gap between the current status and our goal (Yonder Star)?

Example Situation: Considering Aspects of Making a Big Decision

Exploring *my truths*, ask and answer these questions for yourself:

- What is the purpose and what are the intended outcomes of this decision?
- How critical is this decision on a scale of 1–10 in terms of importance? In terms of urgency?
- What are the consequences of a stalled decision or a “no decision” decision?
- What is at risk? For me? For others? For the organization? For customers? The community?
- A year from now how will I be measuring success?
- What do I know? What do I know that I don’t know?
- What would I like to learn more about or understand on a deeper level?
- Who could help me understand what I know I don’t know?
- Who could illuminate what I don’t know that I don’t know?
- Is this one I must make, or can it be delegated as a growth opportunity?
- What roles could others take in assuring the best possible decision is made?
- What interpretations, conclusions, judgments, or decisions have I already made that might preclude me from being an effective decision maker?

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Exploring *their truths*, ask these questions of another person:

Note: If you will be making the final decision, be sure to let the other person(s) know your decision making process so that they realize they are contributing to a decision that you will ultimately be making based on the information and perspectives you have gathered. Also, don't ask these questions if you have already made your decision!

- What are the issues to consider regarding this pending decision from their perspective?
- What role do they see or what contribution can they make toward making a good decision?
- What are the consequences that they see? Opportunities?
- What data points can they share about from their vantage point that might help close the gaps in your understanding?
- How did they arrive at their conclusions; what is the background?
- What can they offer as possible pathways or solutions?
- What are the areas of consideration that you may not yet see that they can illuminate (what you don't even know that you don't know)?
- What are the most important considerations moving forward?

Exploring *our truths*, ask these questions to a group:

- What is the purpose and what are the intended outcomes of this decision? Or you might share the purpose and intended outcomes with the group before asking the balance of the questions.
- How critical is this decision on a scale of 1–10 in terms of importance? In terms of urgency? This is more information that you might be sharing with the group before asking the following questions depending on the situation—rather than making it a guessing game!
- What are the consequences of a stalled decision or a “no decision” decision?
- What is at risk? For our team? For the organization? For customers? The community?
- A year from now how will we be measuring success?
- What do we already know? What do we know that we don’t know?
- What would we like to learn more about or understand on a deeper level?
- Who could help us understand what we know we don’t know?
- Who could help us understand what we don’t even know that we don’t know?
- What outside expertise could help us?

Practical Application #3:

Eliminate the Buts!

The word “but” can wreak havoc in conversations. It is an unconscious speaking habit that can narrow your own pathway of thinking, highlight contradiction versus coexisting perspectives, create defensiveness, and discount the value of appreciative comments.

Shift from limited either/or thinking by using a simple (not easy) technique of using “and” rather than “but.” This shift in language signals your mind that two seemingly disparate ideas can in fact coexist. This structure puts the mind into curiosity and creative problem-solving mode; going to work on how to reach the Yonder Star with the coexistence of two (or more) differing realities. Using the word “but” between the two thoughts signals that the second half of the statement contradicts the first half. Your mind has to then resolve which one is right or which one wins—a much narrower and less productive path.

If another person said the following to you, after you shared your perspective with them, what would your instant reaction be? “I appreciate your perspective on this issue, *but* I have a different point of view.” What retort sprang up? “But” used in this way simply means “disregard all that has gone before.” The focus is on the second, *valid*, half of the sentence. Now you are into the defense of your perspective and have lost sight of the purpose of the discussion in the first place! What if the other person said this to you instead: “I appreciate your perspective on this issue, *and* I have a different point of view.” What question pops up now? This and other language shifts only work if your underlying intention is to cause a more productive interaction with the way you speak and listen.

Here are more examples to demonstrate the effect on willingness to collaborate and make changes. Notice in this next example how it evokes a mood shift from despair to possibility. “Our goal is 15% revenue growth this year, *but* the economy is really hurting us.” Can you hear your brain going to despair and victimhood? There is nothing we can do to change the economy, after all! Instead: “Our

goal is 15% revenue growth *and* the economy has been hurting us.” Did you recognize a mental shift to considering what, given a tough economy, you might be able to do now?

What happens in this example? “We met the attendance criteria *but* we missed on the income projections.” Said this way, the second half of the statement invalidates the first. Shift to: “We met the attendance criteria *and* missed the income projections.” This statement has the two data points sitting side by side, coexisting. Another example: “I like the way you took charge of the event and demonstrated leadership *but* next time there *should* be more time between the speakers.”

If you aspire to really mastering this material, replace “should” with “could” as well as replacing “but” with “and”! For example, “I like the way you took charge of the event and demonstrated leadership, *and* next time there *could* be more time between the speakers.” By substituting “and” for “but,” you allow both perceptions to be valid and be held concurrently. By using “could” instead of “should,” you take the right/wrong positioning out of the statement and simply offer your viewpoint as something to be considered.

When these words demonstrate that you have truly shifted your frame of reference and are approaching your interactions guided by the Operating Principles, it works. Otherwise, no matter how you change what you say, other people still hear your “ands,” “buts,” and “shoulds” anyway! Remarkably, your true feelings and perspectives speak louder than your words.

Practical Application #4:

Unmasking the
Issue—Reframing
“Wrong”

A key leadership skill is the ability to reframe issues, opportunities and situations so that the most creative and productive forward movement can take place. One of the major issue-masking and survival-brain-generated habits of mind gets started with the label “wrong.” You have to be able to constructively reframe *for yourself* when you are dwelling on the lower line of the Leadership Choice Point or in the Distress-Upset Emotional Zone. The mental framework generated by “wrong” creates a very strong pull in that direction for you and for others.

Review the chart on the next page and consider which of these comments on the left-hand side of the column might be typical for you. Check the reframing option on the right-hand side to see how it might shift your thinking, creativity and the direction of the conversation. Practice reframing often when presented with low stakes situations to build your muscle with this skill so that you will have it readily available to do the heavy lifting when you are facing a significant challenge.

Practice Operating Principle #4: *Declare There Is Nothing Wrong or Broken Here and Now* as you read through the examples. What is your internal dialogue? Is it critical or curious? Are you telling yourself “These will never work!”, “That’s not me!”, “That sounds wimpy!” Or are you asking yourself “What if?”, “What might be possible here?”, “How could I incorporate some of these to help me practice my skills at reframing in general?” To fully experience the difference as you read through the examples, imagine someone saying these things to you—perhaps an authority figure, your boss, a board member, etc. What is your instant and automatic reaction? Where do you think the conversation would go from there?

Then consider the reframed comment on the right-hand side. What if that person had said it that way? What is different about your own reaction? Where could the conversation go from there? Finally, what reaction do you want from others when you speak?

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While you are reading through the examples, keep these Operating Principles in mind:

Principle #1: Be Present, Stay in the Game

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow to Understand

Principle #4: Declare There Is Nothing Wrong or Broken *Here and Now*

Principle #8: Confront and Deal with Real Issues

Unmasking the Issue—Reframing “Wrong”

Examples: Reframe for More Accuracy & Collaboration Opportunities

Focusing on “Wrong”, judging, attacking/defending	Reframe to own my perception, exploring <i>truths</i> and being responsible for what gets heard.
“I disagree...”	“My perspective is very different, would you share with me how you came to your point of view on this?”
“That’s wrong.”	“That has not been my experience.”
“You’re wrong.”	“Help me understand your perspective — I’m not there yet.”
“This part is wrong.”	“This part is out of spec on the overall length. The spec says ____ and the length of this part is ____.”
“This report is wrong.”	“The totals on this page do not balance with the totals on the back page.”
“This report is useless.”	“In order to use this report to make decisions, the data will have to be translated into a more summary informational format. I suggest”
“The process is wrong.”	“How has the process contributed to the outcome we are currently experiencing? There may be ways to streamline and improve it to improve results.”
“That’s not what he said to do.”	“I heard the instructions differently.”
“We have the wrong people assigned.”	“Have we really done a good job of matching people’s skills to job requirements?”
“Our meetings are always a waste of time.”	“I have some suggestions for how to improve the value of our weekly meetings.”

Practical Application #5:

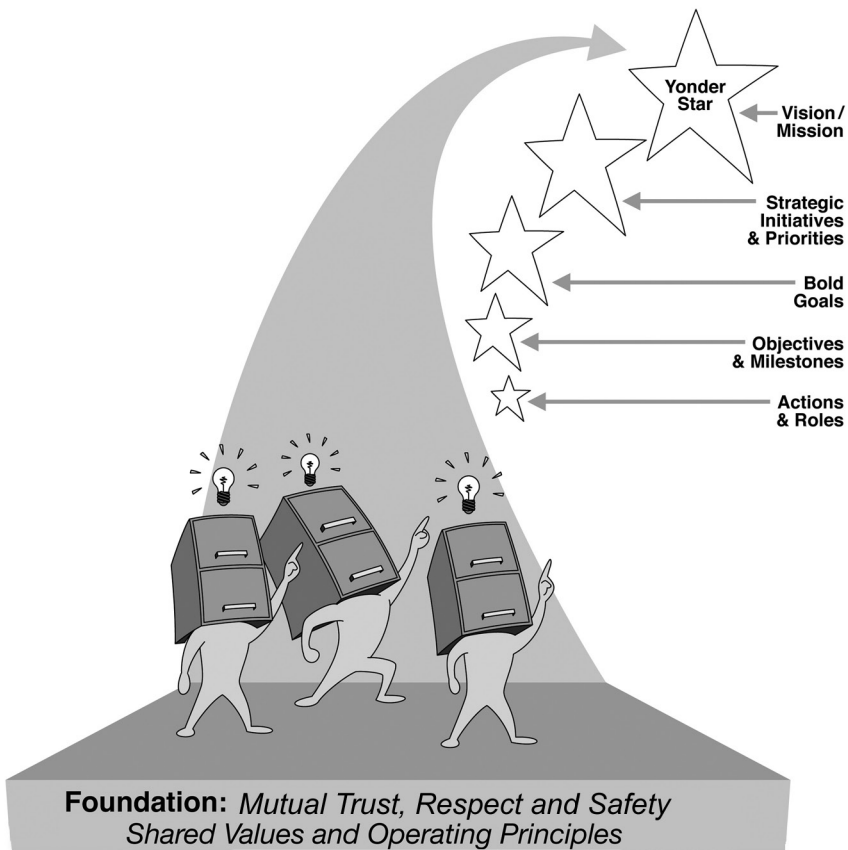
Finding
Alignment—
Moving the
Conversation and
the Focus “One
Up”

Many teams persist in conversations of disagreement or conflicting agendas, wasting energy and time and risking deterioration of relationships, respect, and future capacity for collaboration. The most effective people recognize this stalled or deteriorating state as quickly as possible in conversation, stop driving their own agenda, and proactively move the conversation up to a higher level of alignment before continuing to discuss the current topic.

The Vision-Focused Leadership diagram first introduced in the Essential Notions—Section One and again in this Practical Application shows how you can use the concept of moving the conversation ‘one up’ to reach a new level of alignment, reuniting the participants in a cohesive team of collaborators rather than a competitive group of debaters.

In competitions and debates there is always someone or something to attack, defeat, or diminish. In unproductive group interactions, the competitive or debating nature moves from outside competitors and obstacles to things like considering your own teammates as competitors for airtime or for who has the best and brightest idea. In addition, inordinate amounts of time are spent on discussing issues that are irrelevant or sidetracking from the real issue at hand. Practice using this Practical Application in a number of everyday conversations so that you will have built an experience base and new capacities by the next time a really intense conversation requires its application!

Vision-Focused Leadership



This hierarchy of Yonder Stars works because actions are designed to serve objectives and goals, goals to serve strategic initiatives, and strategies to serve mission and vision; not the other direction. So when you are stuck in a conversation, it makes sense to reach up and tether the conversation to a higher order of priority to get a better view.

If there is no alignment at this next Yonder Star level of the goal, or if the topics you are discussing *are* goals and objectives and the conversation stalls or deteriorates, move the conversation up another level to the next Yonder Star of strategy. Continue the process of looking for a higher place where you are all connected until you can

Finding Alignment—Moving the Conversation and the Focus “One Up”

reconnect with each other and return to Productive Dialogue. That new level is the level where you can interact as team members with a clear intention and direction for the conversation rather than as adversaries.

The Operating Principles to review for this application are:

Principle #4: Declare There Is Nothing Wrong or Broken
Here and Now

Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Principle #6: Confront and Deal with Real Issues

Principle #8: Make It Safe *and* Productive

Work through the following outline for reaching “one-up” in your interactions to achieve alignment.

Outline: Finding Alignment

Moving the Conversation and the Focus “One Up”

When you first notice that the topic or issue is stalled or progress is deteriorating:

1. Stop pushing your own agenda—listen and determine what level of focus is taking place—action conversation, goals conversation, strategy conversation?
2. Intervene in the direction of the conversation by asking a question about the Yonder Star that is one level up from the current focus. Use your own words to check in and see if there is alignment amongst the group about that higher level. For example, if the conversation is stalled regarding choosing a method or pathway (an action item) move the conversation back up to the goal level:

“Hang on, could I just check something out here? The reason we are even discussing these various methods is because of our mutual goal of XX. Is that right? Aren’t we all here because we are committed to accomplishing XX and have run into some tough road blocks?”

3. Restate the goal (Yonder Star) of *this* conversation. Example:

“OK...so the goal of this conversation is to brainstorm and ultimately determine the most effective pathway forward that best utilizes our existing resources. Is that our mutual criteria?”

4. Engage in inquiry, explore and connect. Examples:

- “Help me understand how this (topic) connects to our overall goal of XX.”

Finding Alignment—Moving the Conversation and the Focus “One Up”

- “Help me understand how this (action) you are recommending helps us get closer to our goal of XX.”
- “Help me understand how solving the problem of YY will help us get closer to our goal of XX.”
- “Is this the most leveraged action we can take to move toward our goal of XX?”

Practical Application #6:

Productive
Delegation—
Building
Confidence and
Accountability

One of the most common complaints we hear from our executive clients is that their people are not “accountable” or that they have a hard time holding other people accountable for their assigned projects. Failure to delegate clearly and effectively at the start can often lead to a requirement for much tougher conversations down the road. Since many people avoid difficult conversations, the best way to minimize them is to set things up for success at the beginning. Delegating productively requires practicing a number of the Essential Notions, including Self-Generated Accountability, defining a Yonder Star, owning your perceptions, using “I” statements, and being direct and sensitive, as well as the following Operating Principles:

Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Principle #7: Be Responsible for Creating Value

Principle #8: Make It Safe *and* Productive

To help you apply the Operating Principles to a delegation situation we have provided an outline to walk you through a productive delegation process, a preparation worksheet and some steps suggesting what to do if the project gets off course after the delegation. Be sure to read the Practical Application: *Project Performance Review—Achieving Clarity and Alignment* later in this section. You may also need to use your newly formed muscle from the Practical Application: *Questions to Explore Reality—Curiosity versus Interrogation* from the example *A Project is Off-Track* earlier in this section.

Outline: Productive Delegation

Building Confidence and Accountability

In the Beginning

Before you meet about the project for the first time, ask and answer these seven questions for yourself:

1. What is the *ideal outcome* (Yonder Star) of this project, how will success be measured (quantitatively and time bound), and what internal and external resources are available?
2. What is the *key reason* or motivation for delegation? For example:
 - The other projects/priorities on my plate are more strategic, higher leverage, or require my unique contribution. (Note how this is different than “Because...I don’t have time for this!”)
 - Another team member can best contribute the skills required.
 - It is a developmental opportunity.
3. What are the *opportunities* generated by successful completion?
4. What are the *consequences* of project failure or missed timing?
5. What are the main reasons for *choosing the specific person* to whom you intend to assign this project?
6. What are the *resources* that will be *required* to successfully complete the project in the timeframe envisioned?

7. Force rank for yourself the criteria of quality, timing and cost/investment. No, they can't all be equally important. When push comes to shove, which criteria rules?
 - *Quality*—Is it quality, no matter what it costs or how long it takes;
 - *Deadline*—Or, if it isn't done by X date, it won't matter how good it is;
 - *Budget*—Or, if it costs more than \$X, it doesn't matter how fast or how good it is?

At the First Meeting

1. *Discuss* the seven points listed above.
2. Ask for the other person's perspective and ask what *clarifying* questions he or she has at this point.
3. Check in to see how this assignment may *impact* his or her *other assignments* and due dates and align on adjustments as necessary. If necessary, schedule times with other people who are impacted by any scheduling or resource adjustments.
4. Set up "*check-in*" points and a process (depending on project duration, scope, opportunity, and risks). Set and calendar a specific date, time, and place for the first check-in or project review. Ask the other person to come prepared with the information or measurements you have discussed as well as an agenda for what help, resources, coaching, and advice he or she might need from you. Re-emphasize the force ranked criteria of quality, timing, and cost/investment. Encourage the person to save questions and discussion items for the check-in meetings, if appropriate. If the person doesn't think it can wait until a scheduled meeting, then encourage meeting sooner.

Don't discourage communication; however, having a definite, scheduled check-in date will help you both manage your time more effectively.

5. Have a *conversation about your conversations* (see earlier application) especially covering how you will connect and interact if the project gets off course regarding time, quality, budget, or resources.

At the First Check-In Meeting

1. *Have the meeting!* Keep the date and time you set aside. If change is unavoidable, reschedule the follow-up meeting as close to the original date as possible. Notify the other party as far in advance as possible of the need to reschedule.
2. Have the *other person start the meeting*, move through the update material, and ask questions. Let them know that this is, most importantly, *their scheduled time* to use you as a resource for the project. If you have any unanswered questions, ask them at the end. Peppering people with questions that they may answer in their update trains them to wait for you to ask questions rather than be proactive with sharing the information you have agreed is important to have at the update meetings. It also takes away ownership!
3. *Clarify and align* on any new decisions, direction, or resources, if applicable, resulting from the project review session. Communicate to your own peers and boss if there are changes that impact them.
4. *Have a brief conversation* about this conversation. Ask:
 - a. "What really worked about this session from your perspective?" Wait to get feedback. "Here's what worked from my perspective..."

- b. “What would make it (even) more productive for next time from your perspective?” Wait to get feedback. “Here’s what would make it more productive next time from my perspective...”

Be sure to use “I” statements when answering these for yourself and separate the person from the issue. For example:

- Rather than “It really worked that you showed up on time,” try “It worked well for me that we were able to start right on time.”
- Rather than “It would make it more productive if you were more prepared!” try “It would be more productive for me if we reviewed the XYZ Report during our review sessions.”
- Rather than “It would be more productive if you weren’t so defensive and full of excuses!” try “It would be more productive for me to fully understand the hard data and its implications for the project’s success first, and then have you layer in your feelings and concerns about it.”

Set the next date(s) and time(s)

At the End of the Project

1. Have a *completion meeting* to review, celebrate and learn.
2. *Review the outcomes* in light of the shared Yonder Star.
3. *Celebrate* all accomplishments in the project itself, your partnering in the delegation process, and learning that took place

Section Five: Practical Applications—Conversational Examples & Tools

(see the Practical Application: *Acknowledgment, Appreciation, Celebration and Completion* later in this section).

4. Have a conversation about *what was learned* during the process that can be applied moving forward—about projects in general, about your working relationship, etc.
5. *Declare it complete!*

Course Correction: When the Assignment Gets “Off Course”

What if, from your perspective, the project gets “off course”?

This could even include that you realize you have no idea whether it is on course or not. Bring it up in the next project review meeting if one is imminent or, if appropriate, call for an interim course correction meeting.

Do not wait for the project to fail! Share what you have learned or what you are seeing or not seeing that has you believe that the project is “off course.” Be sure to check out the Practical Application: *Project Performance Review—Achieving Clarity and Alignment* later in this section.

1. *Share the “warning signals”* you have observed that have had you intervene and call this meeting—as an opportunity for a developmental conversation rather than an opportunity for make-wrong or blame.
2. *Validate your perspective* with real-time information (reality check).
3. Ask *what is missing* that could be put in place to get back on track or what roadblock is in the way that could be removed.
4. *Brainstorm solutions.* Ask what additional resources or support may be required.
5. *Align* on new pathways or actions.
6. Return to *regularly scheduled* review meetings or schedule an interim follow-up meeting, depending on the nature of the “warning signals.”

Productive Delegation Preparation Form

Project/Assignment Name: _____

1. Project Description _____

Ideal Outcome(s): _____

Quantitative Measurement(s): _____

Resources/Budget Allocated: _____

2. Key Reason(s) for Delegation: _____

3. New Opportunities Possible _____

For Company/Department: _____

For Client/Client Department: _____

For Me/My Development: _____

For Person Assigned/His or Her Development: _____

4. Consequences of Failure _____

For Company/Department: _____

For Client/Client Department: _____

For Me/My Development: _____

For Person Assigned/His or Her Development: _____

5. Person Assigned: _____

Key Reason for choosing the person for assignment: _____

6. Key Resources required: _____

7. Force Ranked Criteria: ___ Quality ___ Deadline ___ Budget
___ Resources

(This means there can only be one characteristic that is #1, #2 and so forth. Choose!)

First Meeting Scheduled:

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

Practical Application #7:

Productive
Meetings—
Increasing
Engagement and
Outcomes

Patrick Lencione's book, *Death by Meetings*, has been a big seller. Clearly, the amount and value of the time people spend in meetings and the effectiveness or lack thereof is top of mind for many. In addition, the time drain of heavy meeting schedules has a huge influence on a team's productivity.

Reflecting on your recent experience in meetings, what has your role been in any meeting that you called or in which you were a participant? Have you been an unwitting victim to an unproductive event or did you generate a productive environment? Did you contribute to identifying and dealing with real issues, building on the comments of others and recommending structures for accomplishment? Did you prepare a draft Purpose and Intended Outcomes document for distribution and discussion? What part of your meeting's value are you ready to own now?

As you respond to these questions, draw on these Operating Principles:

Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Principle #6: Confront and Deal with Real Issues

Principle #7: Be Responsible for Creating Value

Principle #9: Be Responsible for What Gets Heard

When you are preparing for a meeting, ask yourself the questions on the next two pages and then use the instructions that follow to develop a draft Purpose and Intended Outcomes. When you have the meeting, be ready to add value through intentional actions designed with these Operating Principles in mind.

Productive Meeting Recommendations

If You Called the Meeting

- ✓ Have you included all the constituents (regardless of titles) who have a stake in what is to be discussed or decided?
- ✓ Have you included people only because of titles? Who are you afraid to leave out? Ask what's at risk if you leave them out?
- ✓ Have you created a draft purpose and intended outcomes for the meeting which then guides your agenda and time allocations?
- ✓ Have you identified how the intended outcomes relate to the Yonder Star?
- ✓ Do you start and end your meetings on time?
- ✓ Do you start your meeting by gaining group alignment regarding the outcomes?
- ✓ During the meeting, does the group observe the Operating Principles?
- ✓ Are you soliciting participation from each participant, especially the ones who tend to be more quiet or introspective?
- ✓ Do you summarize what was accomplished during the meeting and the next steps, as well as clarify who, what, and by when?
- ✓ Do you keep a "Parking Lot" list of important yet off-agenda items that arise during the meeting?
- ✓ Do you set a "next time," if appropriate, to review progress and work through any new issues or "Parking Lot" topics?
- ✓ Do you save time at the end of the meeting to openly survey the participants about what worked in this meeting? Do you preserve that learning as process for next time and explore how the next meeting could be even more productive?
- ✓ Do you check in with participants between meetings, especially if they report to you?

Productive Meeting Recommendations

As a Participant

- ✓ Do you check for the purpose and intended outcomes of the meeting and form expectations for your own participation?
- ✓ Do you consider the value to you and others of your participation and get clear about what you are to provide to or get from the meeting?
- ✓ If you are presenting have you developed and communicated the purpose and intended outcomes of your own section?
- ✓ Have you asked to be uninvited if neither you nor the person who called the meeting can state the value your participation would bring?
- ✓ Have you reviewed the list of participants with respect to the purpose and intended outcomes and suggested other participants who have a similar or even greater stake in the outcomes?
- ✓ In the meeting, are you attentive, with your BlackBerry or PDA turned off?
- ✓ Are you judging what each person says or are you considering points of view with open curiosity?
- ✓ Are you competing or interrupting to get in your brilliant perspective, or are you building on the ideas of others to create deeper exploration?
- ✓ Are you being defensive of yourself or others, or are you putting that aside to be able to listen for and share what really happened?
- ✓ Are you connecting the issues or opportunities to the Yonder Star?
- ✓ Are you listening for how you can forward the conversation?
- ✓ Have you brought your problem-solving mind-set?

Productive Meetings: Developing Purpose and Intended Outcomes

The process of developing Purpose and Intended Outcomes is valuable for many situations. In our work with clients we use this process for every client engagement from multi-day facilitations to an executive coaching assignment. In this practical application we are specifically addressing how to use this process regarding meetings. As you read through the description and review the form, think of where else you could use this process beneficially—perhaps wherever you are working toward alignment or clarity!

Productive Meetings – Purpose and Intended Outcomes

Always label your Purpose and Intended Outcomes document as a *DRAFT*, until presented, discussed and each participant has had an opportunity for alignment. Reviewing and gaining alignment at the beginning of a meeting is the first opportunity to generate group alignment—get everyone on the same page. Consider that one of the intended outcomes of preparing this document is to generate a *context* of alignment where *content* can be dealt with productively. Until you can align on “Why are we here and what are we to accomplish?” how can you expect to gain alignment on anything during the meeting itself? Once everyone is on the same page, it will be much easier during the meeting to steer the discussion back on course and to use a “Parking Lot” list to track important—yet off agenda items—deserving of further discussion at another appointed time. Invest the time up front to develop the document, it helps clarify your own thinking. Invest the time at the beginning of the meeting to review, adjust and align. Be patient, over time it will get much easier to prepare and to facilitate the process. The increased productivity and collaboration will be well worth it.

Guidelines: Developing Purpose and Intended Outcomes

Purpose Statements

- A purpose statement is clear, concise and compelling and answers the question—why do this? What difference will it make?
- A purpose statement creates context. It is powerfully articulated in a way that points to the future—or more accurately—pulls for the future. What is the Yonder Star that this meeting or interaction is intended to move forward? What is the bigger picture?
- The purpose statement allows others to stand with us in alignment—it's a tool for mobilizing ownership, participation, a shared commitment and a shared vision.

Intended Outcomes

- Intended outcomes are specific and distinct. If you stand in the future—at the completion of the activity—and look back, this is the list of what was accomplished.
- To create a list of intended outcomes, look from many angles: What will be accomplished for us? For others? What will be learned? What new organizational capabilities will be developed? What new openings for action will be revealed?
- Have the list be complete, inclusive, clear, and unambiguous.
- State them as having been completed.
- Order the list in a way that communicates clearly—that rolls out naturally in the direction of achieving the purpose. For a meeting, a well-organized list of intended outcomes can become the agenda.

Worksheet: Purpose and Intended Outcomes

Purpose: (What’s the point? What is the bigger picture or Yonder Star for having the meeting anyway?)

To create the possibility for _____

Intended Outcomes:

1. To have

2. To have

3. To have

4. To have

5. To have

6. To have taken ourselves lightly!

Practical Application #8:

Project
Performance
Review—
Achieving
Clarity and
Alignment

At times you may be confronted with the situation where you see that an otherwise qualified team member is failing to perform on a particular project or area of their responsibility and yet he or she does not see it the way you do, or at least will not admit it.

One temptation is to hint around, not wanting to “upset the apple cart” or face the risk of getting embroiled in a difficult and time-consuming conversation. Your action may include indirect references, less-than-straightforward statements, sarcasm, and disguised requests like “we really need to get this work done.”

While all of the Operating Principles are essential to engaging in this type of conversation with grace and ease, here are a few key principles to review:

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow To Understand

Principle #4: Declare There is Nothing Wrong or Broken *Here and Now*

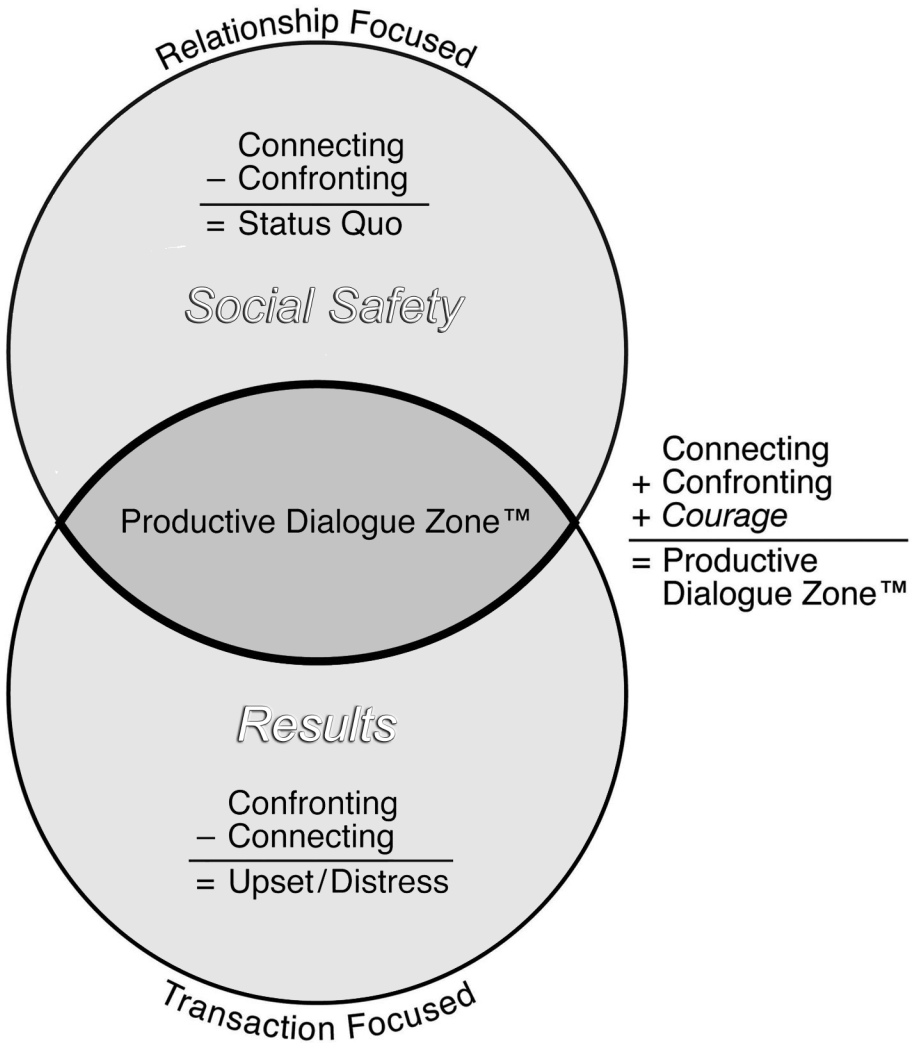
Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Principle #6: Confront and Deal With Real Issues

Principle #9: Be Responsible for What Gets Heard

The model to keep in mind while engaged in this dialogue is the Productive Dialogue Zone.

Productive Dialogue Zone



There are several direct *and* sensitive steps you can take in addressing progress and getting corrective action while maintaining the relationship and being efficient with both parties' time. Use the seven steps in the outline we have provided to have a productive project performance review.

Outline: Project Performance Review

Achieving Clarity and Alignment

1. *Schedule a progress review* at a specific time and location that works for both of you and where you will not be interrupted.
2. Be sure you both have allowed enough time to *stay with the conversation* until it is complete.
3. *State your view of the job expectations* and see if they are clear and mutually understood.
 - a. If they aren't, then at least you have identified the issue. Go over the specifics again and request a commitment to the agreed-upon work and due date or a new date if the original date is no longer feasible.
 - b. If you both agree on the work and due dates and disagree on progress, then your job is to explore for mutually observable performance data; tasks, quality standards, and due dates. Check to see that you have the best data, are assessing progress from the same standpoint, and are not acting out of emotion. Bottom line, it is essential to mutually sort out the way that it is and the way it isn't before you can have any really successful conversations for altering performance and producing the desired outcomes.
 - c. Your job is to shift the focus of the conversation “up and out” from confronting each other to mutually confronting expected results, due dates, the actual rate of progress, and what will be required to get the job done.
4. Once you both agree on the status of the work and the short-fall, *ask, “What happened?”* Listen newly and openly, and keep

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asking until the other person has been able to fully say what he or she has to say. You don't have to agree, just listen.

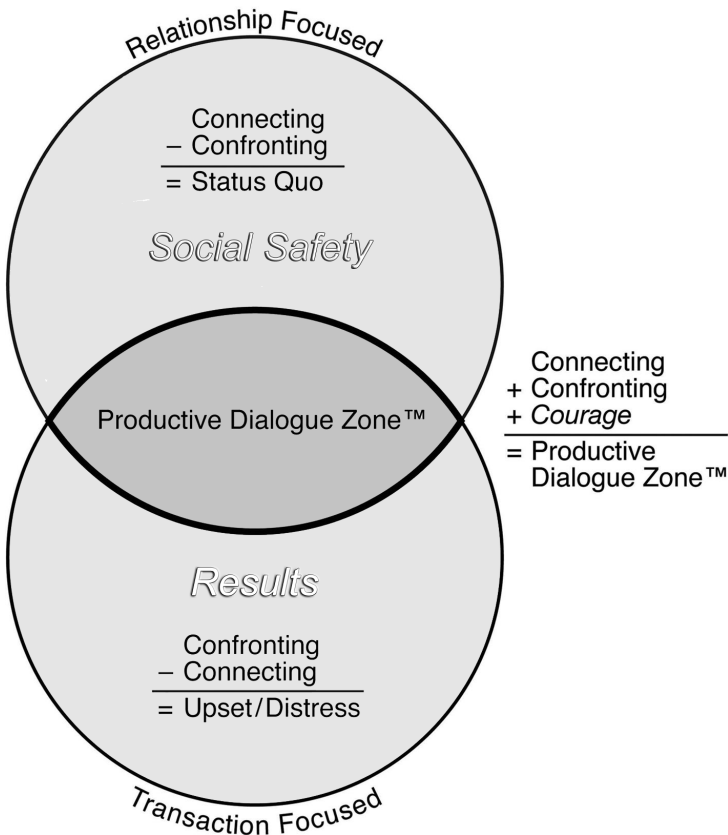
5. Mutually *set new targets* or agree on additional resources to be brought to bear to assure originally scheduled completion.
6. Set up any *new tracking or reporting* you both agree is needed to be confident going forward.
7. Ask what the team member has *learned*.

Practical Application #9:

Dialogue for
Making a
Role Change
or Closing a
Performance Gap

Almost every client we have comes up against situations where someone is not performing satisfactorily or the job the person has been doing is going to change significantly. In either case, our clients often struggle with identifying and working in the “Productive Dialogue Zone.” The client starts a conversation with the person and fails to follow through with the uncomfortable part. Nothing changes, of course. The client then gets emotional, starts issuing directives, the person’s attitude plunges, and no real change is created.

Productive Dialogue Zone



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Referring to the model, you will remember that your first task is to be connected with the person so you can confront the issue together. “Not so easy,” you say. “The minute I bring up the situation, he or she gets upset and we get nowhere.” It’s common for a person called into a performance conversation to immediately hear criticism and for the person bringing up the question to be hesitant or tentative, such that one or both go on the defensive. Being connected is a fundamental requirement for a Productive Dialogue, and yet this seems nearly impossible to accomplish when the subject is extremely uncomfortable for one or more parties.

While all of the Operating Principles are essential to engaging in this type of conversation with grace and ease, here are a few to particularly keep in mind:

Principle #1: Be Present, Stay in the Game

Principle #4: Declare There is Nothing Wrong or Broken
Here and Now

Principle #8: Make It Safe *and* Productive

Principle #9: Be Responsible for What Gets Heard

We have designed the following “recipe” for the conversation to increase your odds of success. Our approach is based on the view that you cannot get anyone to really change beliefs and behaviors simply by telling him or her to do so—only the person can change him or herself. You may get vicious compliance by forcing your will without real, productive change that then calls forth the best from the person. To that, we add David Whyte’s assertion that “no one needs to change but everyone has to have the conversation.” If you can’t make people change and yet they have to have the conversation, how do you engage with them in a way that causes real results? The essential ingredient is choice. Have a conversation that brings people to choice—their own choice. Use the following “recipe” exactly as written until you get your balance. After you have had some successes, add your own unique spices.

Recipe: Dialogue for Making a Role Change or Closing a Performance Gap

Before the Conversation:

Clarify your intention and write down your Yonder Star for the conversation. To have it empower the two of you, it will contain a statement that addresses, at a minimum:

- ✓ honoring the person involved (who he or she is);
- ✓ the specific physical and financial results to be achieved;
- ✓ your commitment regarding the type of relationship you intend to have after the conversation is over.

Set up a specific time and place where you can have an undisturbed conversation until completion, including time to work through any upset, if necessary.

Opening Statement:

1. Start by letting the person know that you are going to have a rigorous conversation (topic of performance gap or job/role change) with them where you will describe what is required and ask them to make some choices.
2. Describe the new job to be done or review the specific, measurable performance and behaviors required to successfully perform the job the person currently has (at which he or she is failing—the performance gap).
3. Let the person know that he or she does not have to change, does not even have to do that job. From now on, however, the person that is doing that job will perform it as you have described. You are creating a fork in the road and asking the person to choose—perform the new way or engage in a

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conversation for some other job, either within the company or somewhere else.

Example Opening Statements:

- “John, my intention in this meeting is to have a rigorous conversation about the role you currently have in the organization and the outcomes that role is expected to produce (or will be changing to).”
- “The issue I’m here to discuss today is the gap between the expected outcomes in your department of X and the actual outcomes of Y, or the impact your leadership and communication style have on the culture of your work team, etc. These results are required for successful performance in the role of _____.”
- “You aren’t required to change or to do that job, however, from now on the person that is doing that job will perform it as I have described.”
- “I’d like to get your feedback to determine if *you* are willing to make the changes and corrections required for that job.”

After Their Comments or Questions, If Any:

1. To make it a clear choice, be straight about the fact that you do not know whether there is another job in the firm that fits and meets the person’s pay desires. You will be fair about giving the person a shot if there is such a job or working with them on outplacement if not.
2. If the person says he or she will commit to do the existing job successfully or will take on the new role, as described,

emphasize the elements of the role that are currently missing in the person's performance and behaviors and suggest that it is not a good fit unless significant changes occur. You may ask the person to go home and think about it overnight or over the weekend.

3. If the person still says he or she will do the job and perform it well, it is time for an even more rigorous conversation in which you point out that, based on past performance; the person isn't on good ground to make such a promise. You will agree to give the person a shot and be fully supportive with added training, mentoring, coaching, etc. The person will, however, have to find such a program, acceptable to you, and take on his or her own growth and development.
4. If the person decides not to step up, then it's time for another level of choice. Do you have another job in the firm that the person can do and, if so, is it at the same pay grade? If not, be rigorous about the new arrangement and bring the person to choice again.
5. Rather than let the person take on a new job to which he or she is really not committed, work together on an outplacement plan that allows the person to maintain dignity and also survive financially.

A Few Caveats to Keep in Mind:

- ✓ Remember that your own discomfort about being direct can easily get in the way. That's all about you and the remedy will come from your chair. Keep noticing and clearing your own feelings.
- ✓ Remember that you are dealing with someone who is probably experiencing threat or criticism or both. Your job is to focus the confronting conversation on the qualities that will be exhibited by the person who will be doing the existing or

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new job (Yonder Star). Emphasize that he or she does not have to have those qualities to be a valuable person, only to have that job.

- ✓ We are reminded of the scenario used by the child psychologist who has her patient “talk to the puppet” on her hand rather than talk to her, an adult authority figure. In your case, the puppet is the Yonder Star (job expectations performed well) that the two of you are confronting together. Focusing on that, you will be much more able to address the gaps that you feel would have to be filled if the person were to take on the job.
- ✓ You may well have a series of conversations to get to your intended outcomes. There is no requirement to get it all done in one or two. “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” Mom used to say.

Practical Application #10:

Acknowledgement,
Appreciation,
Celebration and
Completion

Some of our clients struggle with acknowledgement, showing appreciation, and celebrating results with the team. Some of the common threads we hear behind the issue are:

- Our clients are high performers themselves and are always focusing on the next thing, so they have already moved on by the time the accomplishment is complete.
- By the time the scorecard is done (contract has been awarded, work completed, numbers tallied, etc.) it seems anticlimactic.
- Various key team members are traveling, and by the time a date can be found that all can be present, it seems irrelevant.
- Some of our clients are the “glass-is-half-empty” types and focus on the parts that were not achieved or where they think the team could have done better. Nothing is ever enough for them so celebrating would reward less than excellent work.
- Fear that acknowledging someone will give that person a big head or the person will want more money or both.

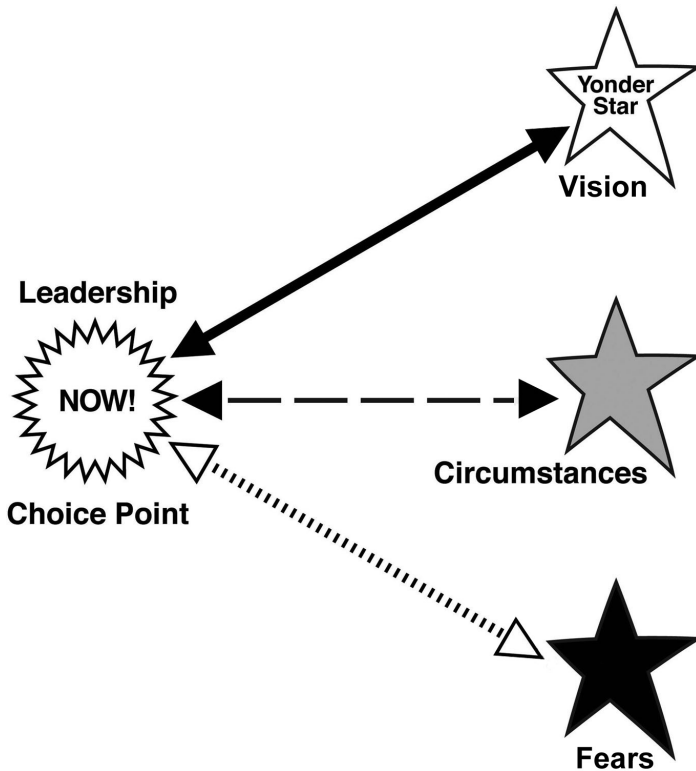
Acknowledgement and celebration are essential to fueling passion, making people feel valid and valuable, and giving the team a real sense of progress that makes it all worthwhile. People who do not get a chance to celebrate a new level of accomplishment often fall back to an old, lower level where they just repeat what they know how to do rather than reaching for yet another higher aspiration. Acknowledging and celebrating accomplishments helps lock in a “new normal.” Most high performers are aware that if they produce extraordinary results,

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they will be asked for even more next time. To support them in going for it, it works to show full appreciation for the current results. If they don't get a chance to celebrate and complete the accomplishment, the lingering incompleteness may act as a "suppress button," perhaps for years, and may limit both their effectiveness and willingness to set and go for challenging goals the next time.

The model to keep in mind while engaged in this dialogue is the Leadership Choice Point. The stretch, risk and uncertainty of operating on the upper line of the Leadership Choice Point to accomplish higher aspirational goals generates endorphins, and other biochemistry that exhilarate and support success. You want to affirm and lock in how it feels to accomplish and win. Those are the "good stress" results of Vision-Focused Leadership.

Leadership Choice Point



Acknowledgement, Appreciation, Celebration and Completion

While all of the Operating Principles are helpful to engaging in these types of conversations with grace and ease, here are a few to especially keep in mind:

Principle #2: Listen Newly, Be Intentionally Slow To Understand

Principle #3: Take Myself Lightly

Principle #5: Explore *truths*: Mine, Theirs, and Ours

Principle #8: Make It Safe *and* Productive

If you find yourself among the holdouts when it comes to celebration, here's a checklist for you:

Checklist for Hold-outs!

- ✓ *Identify* the unconscious and unexamined story or interpretation from your own life that is running your behavior.
- ✓ *Take responsibility* for your own bias and juxtapose that with the gains for the team if they get to “put a marker down” on the accomplishment and anchor it with a fun time together.
- ✓ Let the participants know how much you *appreciate* their performance and their contribution to fulfilling the Yonder Star.
- ✓ Ask what the team members would see as an appropriate celebration for the accomplishment and do your best to put that together. When you get good at this, set it up in advance so it adds to the incentive in the first place.
- ✓ *Celebrate* as soon and as often as possible, perhaps at each key milestone, so that it becomes a habit for the group. Participate yourself. Your presence is essential, as it demonstrates your commitment and appreciation much more than your words.

If the Project Hasn't Been Fully Completed

A special word has to be said about *completion*. What we mean here is the notion that something has run its full course. Even if only part of a goal was achieved, or perhaps even more importantly when the team fell short, it is very productive to complete the intention by doing the following:

1. Get together with the individual or team involved and *confront the results together*.
2. Allow plenty of time for participants to say whatever there is to say about the outcome with no right answers expected and no commenting on what people have said. The objective is to *give everyone a chance to vent* and let go of his or her story about what happened.
3. *Continue the process* until no one has anything more to say.
4. *Bring the participants to choice*—let go of the past and focus on fulfilling our Yonder Star or continue holding on. Ask the following questions:
 - ✓ Is everyone “complete”—willing to let go of the situation, project, or goal and move on?
 - ✓ Are all of you willing to let the whole event become part of the past?
 - ✓ Are you willing to forgive yourself or each other for any shortfalls or upsets that may still be hanging around?
 - ✓ Are you ready to engage newly?

Practical Application #11:

From Upset to
Productivity—
Uncovering
and Speaking
Commitment

Taking yourself lightly, expanding your Learning Zone, and effectively collaborating with others all require that you build your capacities to recognize and move through your own upsets and those of people around you.

Wouldn't it be valuable to you if:

- you could express yourself calmly and powerfully even when you are very concerned, upset, or fearful;
- you could be considered a thoughtful and passionate person rather than a touchy emotional one;
- people around you would stop whining and complaining and get to work;
- you built a reputation for dealing with difficult and emotional situations and turning them into productive conversations where results get produced and participants experience being valued and valuable?

When something gets in the way of your commitments, goals, or intentions and seems to threaten success, you may find yourself upset, concerned, or fearful. The more intensely you care, the more upset you may get.

Here is the recommended preparation followed by a worksheet to help shift the focus of your thinking and conversations from survival-brain worries, concerns, and fears (the lower line of the Leadership Choice Point) to a place of perspective, power, and productivity (the upper line in the Leadership Choice Point). The process requires self

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observing, catching yourself and reframing the way you think about and react to upsets, fears, worries, and complaints, whether you are working with your own upset or those of others around you. Once again, it is simple and not easy.

Shifting Your Own Upsets: Uncovering and Speaking Your Commitment

To use the process for yourself, first practice with the worksheet. Then use it to clear yourself when you have a topic or issue that you feel upset about or want to complain about, *before* you enter into that difficult conversation with another. You can also use it to review a failed, unproductive attempt and learn how you might have approached the interaction more effectively. The better you are at using this process for yourself, the better you will be at using it with other people.

Step 1: Be present and notice!

Notice when you are upset, worried, fearful, or complaining. Each person exhibits his or her own symptoms and they can vary based on the situation and people involved.

- Know yourself; know your triggers and your hot buttons.
- Learn to observe and catch yourself in that mode.
- Breathe Out!
- Ask yourself a brain-switching question—switching from survival brain mode to your thinking brain. For example; “What’s the bigger picture here?”
- Go to the worksheet to uncover your commitments and to return your power before the next conversation.

Step 2: Get curious and reframe!

Begin to relate to upsets as clues to commitment and to consider upset people (including yourself) as intensely committed. Begin to wonder: What is the commitment in the background that is fueling this upset in the foreground?

Intervene in your “righteous rage of the wronged,” your fear of failure, or your avoidance of potentially looking bad. Shift to

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considering yourself an intensely committed person, wonder what the intense commitment is that is driving your reaction, and...go to the worksheet!

Step 3: Re-engage at the level of commitment!

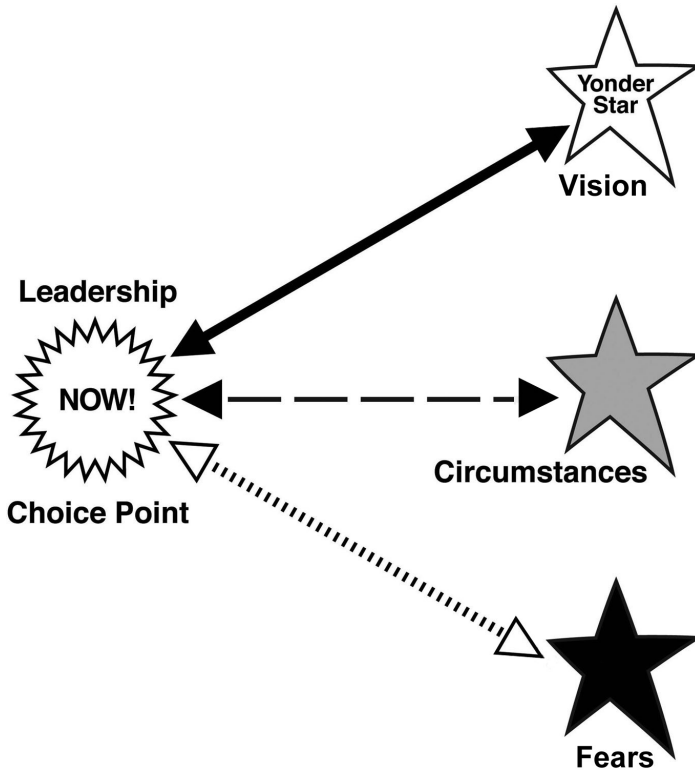
When you lead and speak from your commitments (the upper line of the Leadership Choice Point—what you are for) rather than your worries, concerns, and upsets (the lower line of the Leadership Choice Point—what you are against or trying to avoid), you can move the conversation and the energy in a productive direction. You also shift the way people listen to you on the topic and make it easier for them to hear you. Most people find it difficult to listen to and deal with upsets, complaints, and the fears of others in a productive way. You minimize your ability to be heard and appreciated for your perspective when you communicate from your survival brain. Since there is a commitment hidden in every upset, learn to find it and communicate from there. Over time, and with lots of practice, you will notice that you can stop, reframe, and reengage in the middle of your own upset!

Use the following worksheet and process to help recover your thinking brain and speak from your commitments.

Outline and Worksheet Instructions: For Your Own Upsets!

From Upset to Productivity—Uncovering and Speaking Commitment

Leadership Choice Point



Step 1: Pick an example of something you have been upset about or feel worried, concerned, or fearful about. List the *topic*. It is usually an event, action, or conversation (or the lack of one) rather than a person. Remember to separate the person from the issue. While there is often a person or group associated with your upset, separating the person from the event is critical. If you still think your topic is a person, ask yourself, “What happened with that person?” That is the topic.

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Step 2: Next list your *feelings* (not concepts) about the situation. Feelings are usually described with one word each (sad, angry, frustrated, anxious, fearful). This step allows you to identify the key emotions in the upset and become more of an observer of your feelings rather than controlled by them. When it is time to re-engage with another person, you will be able to speak *about* your emotions rather than speaking *from* your emotions.

Step 3: List your worries, concerns, and fears. What can go wrong if this issue isn't handled? What is the worst-case scenario? What are you fearful of? Ask yourself, "So what if that happens?" Write some more. Your intention here is to get the worries, concerns, and fears out of your head and onto paper, which shines a light on them. A fully and deeply explored list of worries and concerns is important for the next step.

Step 4: Review your worries/concerns/fears. Write each statement in the opposite (flip them 180 degrees) to uncover several *possible* commitments, intentions, or a Yonder Star. This is not about being positive. It is a creative process to return to your higher thinking brain—the part that can consider options, use creativity, and engage others in a collaborative manner.

Step 5: Review each of your new statements. Which of them (or combination of them) seems to state what you are most committed to? If you haven't said it accurately, what new statement can you write, spring-boarding from what you currently have, that accurately captures the real essence?

Step 6: Get re-engaged with your thinking brain.

Acknowledge your commitment and share it with others, if appropriate. Acknowledge your emotions around the commitment and share them, if appropriate. If shared, speak about your emotions, not through them! Step into issue identification and brainstorming mode now that you have access to the thinking part of your brain. Include others who can help with identifying solutions or implementing them. Create a new game plan and get into action.

Worksheet: For Your Own Upsets

From Upset to Productivity

- 1. Topic (Often the ‘trigger’)** Example: Missed deadline on the event timeline

- 2. Feelings/Emotions** Examples: Anxious, concerned, fearful, angry, frustrated

- 3. Fears—Worries—Concerns** Examples: I/we will look bad. The project/event will fail. The consequences will be unacceptable. I could lose my job/get blamed. *Get underneath, ask so what?* The event won’t raise enough money. It will be unprofessional and hurt our brand/reputation. The XYZ program won’t be fully funded. The clients won’t have full value delivered.

- 4. Possible Commitments/Yonder Star List** Examples: I/we will display our best. The project/event will be wildly successful. The ripple effect from this event will be favorable for us, and our clients. It will be a contribution to my career experiences. The event will raise plenty of money, fully funding the XYZ program. It will be very professional and our reputation/brand will be enhanced. The clients will be very pleased with the value the event provides. You get the idea...now write yours!

Worksheet – Page 2: For Your Own Upsets!

From Upset to Productivity

- 5. Choose and Express Your Commitment and Re-Engage with Your Thinking Brain** Example: I am committed to a highly successful event that accomplishes or even exceeds the goals for our clients and demonstrates our skill and professionalism. I have been very frustrated and even angry about the missed date on our event timeline. I have been anxious and worried that we would still be able to pull it off in a professional and successful manner. It is going to take some creativity and a plan that I haven't already thought of to get us back on track. I am ready to have a conversation for the next actions we can take to pull it off. Write Yours:

Shifting Upsets of Others: Listening to Uncover Commitment

To use this process successfully with others requires that you are able to remain calm and focused in the presence of other people when they are upset, concerned, complaining, or intensely emotional. The most frequent reaction when one person gets upset is that the other person (who was not previously upset) either:

1. Gets upset *along with* the person—colluding with the unfairness or outrageousness of their predicament—which generally leads to both people getting “spun up.” Now two people (or more) are caught up in their survival brains and have blocked access to creativity, analysis and reason.
2. Gets upset *at* the person for being so upset or complaining;
 - Takes it as a personal attack or
 - Heaps judgment on the other person for being in that state

Leading to:

- Defense or counter attack
- “Should-ing” on the other person: “You shouldn’t be upset.” “You shouldn’t talk that way.” “You should calm down.” “It’s not really that bad.” “There is really nothing to worry about.” “Stop complaining.”

The end result is escalation, disconnection, and waste. Escalation can also lead to irreparable damage to the relationship and certainly expends a huge amount of energy expanding the issue rather than resolving it.

Consider the escalation of an upset much like a traffic accident. Two vehicles are traveling down the road, one behind the other, when the driver of the car in front slams on its brakes with no warning. The second car slams into the rear of the first car, causing lots of damage to both cars and maybe to the people inside them. In traffic law (in most states), the driver from behind is deemed to be “at fault.” “But, officer, he slammed on his breaks with no warning!” Nevertheless, the car traveling behind has the last opportunity to prevent the accident.



And so it is with upsets. When people are upset, many say and do things they probably would not do in their “right mind.” When another person is upset and you are not (yet), then, as in the traffic example, you are the last person with the opportunity to prevent an accident and resulting damage (escalation). When you become upset because they are upset, or because of whatever they said or did while they were upset (out of their mind—or out of their thinking mind, anyway) the situation escalates. Consider that you were the last one who had the opportunity to avoid that accident or, said another way; *you were the last one who could grant the other person the opportunity to restore his or her dignity.*

Step 1: Be present and notice!

Notice when another person is upset, seems to be complaining, is expressing their concerns or talking about what they don’t want (lower line of the Leadership Choice Point Graphic). Stay present and connected.

Step 2: Get curious and reframe!

Begin to relate to upsets as clues to commitment (Yonder Star) and to consider upset people as intensely committed. Begin to wonder: What is the commitment in the background that is fueling this upset in the foreground?

Shift or reframe your label for the person and the situation from upset, out of control, emotional, or any other similar label, and relate to them as a very committed person whose commitment is currently hidden in their upset. Listen, listen, listen. Use the worksheet to help you discover a process to listen through the upset and complaints (lower line of the Leadership Choice Point) to hear the commitment in the background (upper line of the Leadership Choice Point).

Step 3: Re-engage at the level of commitment!

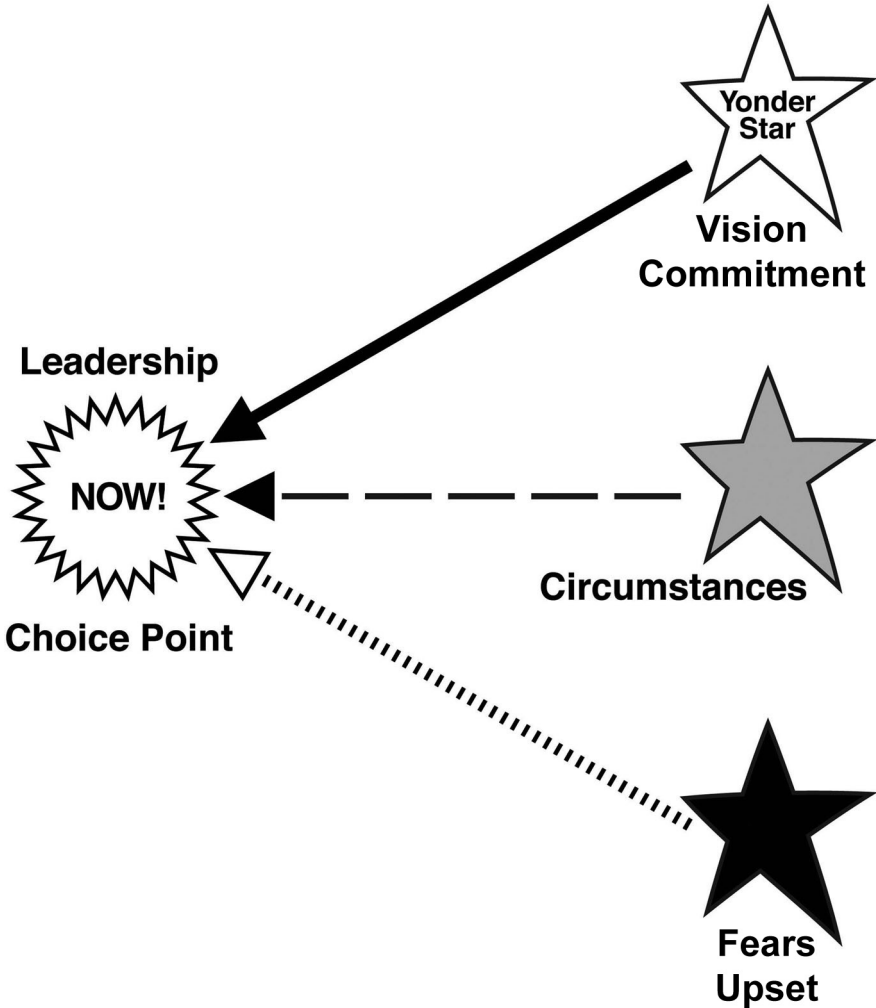
When you engage with another person as a committed and passionate person and speak their commitment back to them, they feel heard and validated and very often the upset or unproductive emotion de-escalates. Worries, concerns, and fears can be identified, reframed and discussed as roadblocks and potholes to tackle *together* inside the context of the commitment that is being threatened and therefore stirring them up. Facts and data can be explored separately from the emotions tied to them. Required resources can be identified and productive action steps can be developed. Your reputation will build as someone who can handle tough situations, conversations, and people. People will appreciate being around you when they know they can be fully appreciated for their passion and humanity and can get trued up to the bigger picture by interacting with you.

Use the following worksheet and process to play a productive role in helping a person who is currently upset return to their thinking brain. Remember to be sure you are not in reaction or upset mode yourself!

**Outline and Worksheet Instructions:
When Others Are Upset!**

From Upset to Productivity—Uncovering and Speaking Commitment

Leadership Choice Point



Step 1: Listen for the key content and topical area of the upset. There may be many, so pick one that you can work with during the conversation. It is usually an event, action, or conversation (or the lack

of one) rather than a person. Remember to separate the person from the issue. While there is often a person or group associated with the upset, separating the person from the event is critical. Sometimes it will sound as if *you* are the issue for the other person in an upset. Stay centered, resist the temptation to defend yourself, and listen through what sounds like an attack to what may have caused the upset. People who are upset are not rational...they are in their survival brain!

Step 2: Next listen for the *feelings* (not concepts) that are being expressed about the situation and the intensity of their feelings on a scale of 1-10 where one is low and ten is high. Feelings are usually described with one word each (sad, angry, frustrated, anxious, fearful). You may have heard the other person state these emotions explicitly, more likely you will have to listen beyond what they say and consider what feelings are being expressed. This step in the process allows you to identify the key emotions in the upset which helps you understand how significant it is for the other person and to keep your attention and listening “other focused.”

Step 3: List their worries, concerns, and fears. Some may have been explicitly expressed and some you may have picked up from behind the words. You don't have to get it “right” at this point. This list is your perception and interpretation of their fears, concerns and worries. The point of this part of the process is to identify what the concerns and fears seem to be so that you can then uncover a commitment in the background.

Step 4: Review the worries/concerns/fears. Write each statement in the opposite (flip them 180 degrees) to uncover several *possible* commitments, intentions, or a Yonder Star. This is not about being positive. It is a creative process to give you a place to speak from to help return the other person to their higher thinking brain—the part that can consider options, use creativity, and engage others in a collaborative manner.

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Step 5: Review each of the new statements. Which of them (or combination of them) seems to state what they may be most committed to?

Step 6: Engage with the other person by acknowledging their commitment. Ask them how you can help further identify the gaps between the present situation and their commitment. What role can you play in the resolution? Step into issue identification and brainstorming mode if you now have access to the thinking part of their brain. Include others who can help with identifying solutions or implementing them. Create a new game plan and get into action.

Step 7: If their upset is not diminished, or if you have become upset, use “I” statements and:

- State your intention to resolve this with them
- Ask to reschedule giving you time to reflect and regroup

Step 8: Before your next conversation have a conversation about your conversations (see prior practical application), then try again to resolve the topic or issue!

Worksheet: When Others Are Upset

1. Topic (Often the ‘trigger’)

2. Their Feelings/Emotions (Explicit or implicit)

3. Fears—Worries—Concerns

4. Possible Commitments/Yonder Star List:

5. Choose and Express Their Commitment and re-engage with their thinking brain.

Example: I am hearing that you are committed to a highly successful event that accomplishes or even exceeds the goals for our clients *and* demonstrates our skill and professionalism. I am sensing frustration and maybe even some anger about the missed date on our event timeline. I share your concern about being able to pull it off in a professional and successful manner. It is going to take some creativity and a plan that we haven't already thought of to get us back on track. Are you ready to have a conversation for the next actions we can take to pull it off?

Write Yours: _____

6. If their upset is not diminished:

Use "I" statements, state your intention to resolve this with them and ask to reschedule.

EXAMPLE: This topic is important and I want to help get it resolved. I need some time to reflect and a chance to think through some things. Could we arrange to talk again about this (suggest a date)? DO NOT SAY: "Clearly you are upset and in your survival brain so let me know when you are able to have a rational conversation about this!" Escalation is sure to happen! Write something in your own words for practice:

7. Before the next conversation:

See the Practical Application earlier in this section *Have a Conversation About Your Conversations—Building Conversational Capacity*.

Practical Applications

1. The Three Levels of Conversational Impact as a Diagnostic Tool
 - A Conversation About Your Conversations
 - A Conversation About Your Relationship
2. Questions to Explore Reality—Curiosity versus Interrogation
3. Eliminate the Buts!
4. Unmasking the Issue—Reframing “Wrong”
5. Finding Alignment—Moving the Conversation and the Focus
“One Up”
6. Productive Delegation
7. Productive Meetings
8. Project Performance Review
9. Dialogue for Making a Role Change or Closing a Performance Gap
10. Acknowledgement, Appreciation, Celebration and Completion
If the Project Hasn’t Been Fully Completed
11. From Upset to Productivity
 - Shifting Your Own Upsets
 - Shifting the Upsets of Others