



TOPIC:
Interpersonal
Leadership/
Difficult
Conversations

HOW DO YOU ENGAGE IN DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS?

25

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VIDEO SUMMARY:

In this excerpt, Joseph describes an essential quality of successful difficult conversations: safety. To create safety, you have to help the other person know you care about their interests and that you care about them. This creates a condition of mutual purpose and respect. By creating safety, you can avoid defensiveness and create the opportunity to be heard.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Joseph said people never become defensive because of what you're saying; they become defensive because of why they think you're saying it. How did that statement resonate with you or challenge your thinking? Share with your team.

2. On your own, think about a difficult conversation you've had that didn't go as well as you'd like. Looking back, can you identify any elements of safety that were missing? How might you handle a conversation like that differently in the future? Note your thoughts below. When you're finished, if you feel comfortable, share a key takeaway with your team.



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3. As a team, to practice creating safety, use this hypothetical difficult conversation.

You volunteered to help your supervisor find a graphic design contractor for an upcoming project. A friend of yours hears about the project and asks if you could use your influence to get him the job. You know he's a talented artist, but he can be unreliable about meeting deadlines and putting forth full effort. You decide to meet him for coffee and talk about whether or not you would consider him for the project.

- Discuss as a team what you could say to establish mutual purpose at the start of the conversation. Write your ideas on a flip chart or whiteboard.
- Next, share ideas about how to establish mutual respect. Again, write your ideas on a flip chart or whiteboard.
- Lastly, as a team, discuss any insights about increasing safety that could be applied to your future conversations.