

GRAND RIVER | SOLUTIONS

Critical Conversations: Practical Tools for Navigating Difficult Dialogues

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Meet Your Facilitator

Kateeka J. Harris has nearly two decades of experience in higher education at four year and two-year colleges and universities including Title IX compliance, student conduct, multicultural program administration, and undergraduate admissions. Kateeka is a nationally recognized expert in Student Conduct and Title IX Administration and has held leadership positions within the Association for Student Conduct Administration, including President. Kateeka received her Master of Arts in Higher Education from Slippery Rock University and anticipates receiving her Doctor of Educational Leadership from Texas Wesleyan University next year.



Vision

We exist to help create safe and equitable work and educational environments.



Mission

Bring systemic change to how school districts and institutions of higher education address their Clery Act & Title IX obligations.



Core Values

- ❖ Responsive Partnership
- ❖ Innovation
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Transformation
- ❖ Integrity

PRINCIPALS OF ENGAGEMENT



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Creating Curious Spaces

Requires Participant Consent to:

- Be fully present
- Listen with an open mind
- Use “I” or “In my experience” statements
- Seek to understand and not just be heard
- Explore intent and acknowledge impact
- Expect discomfort



Agenda

01

Defining Critical Conversations

02

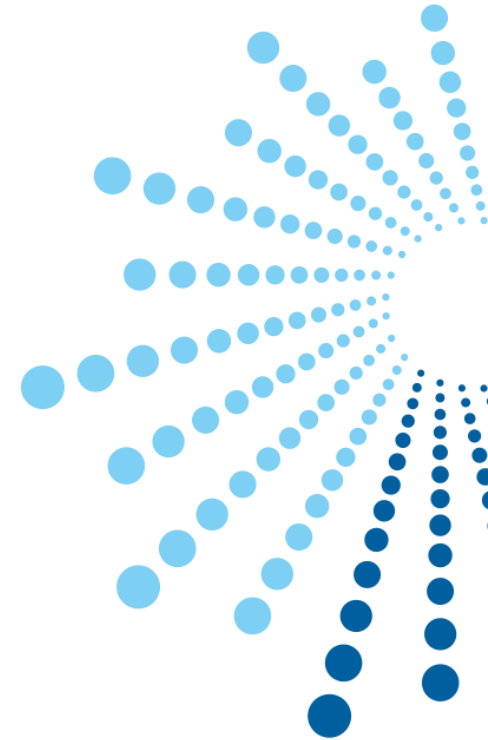
The Communication System

03

Critical Conversations for Response Toolkit

04

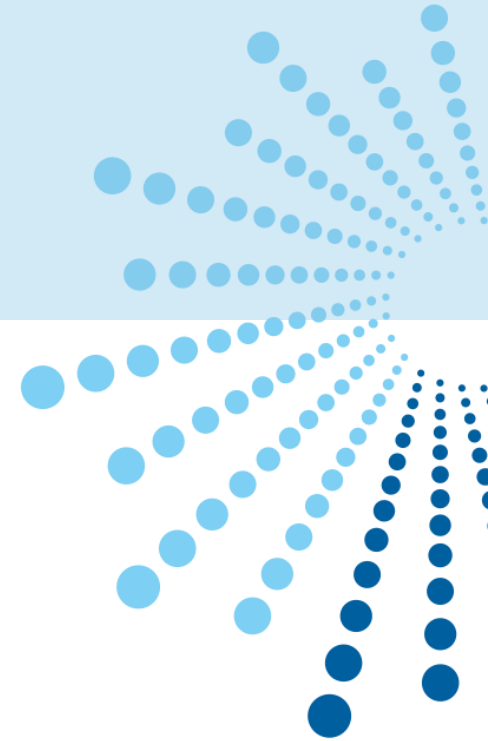
Case Studies: Real Conversations in Real Time





Defining Critical Conversations

01

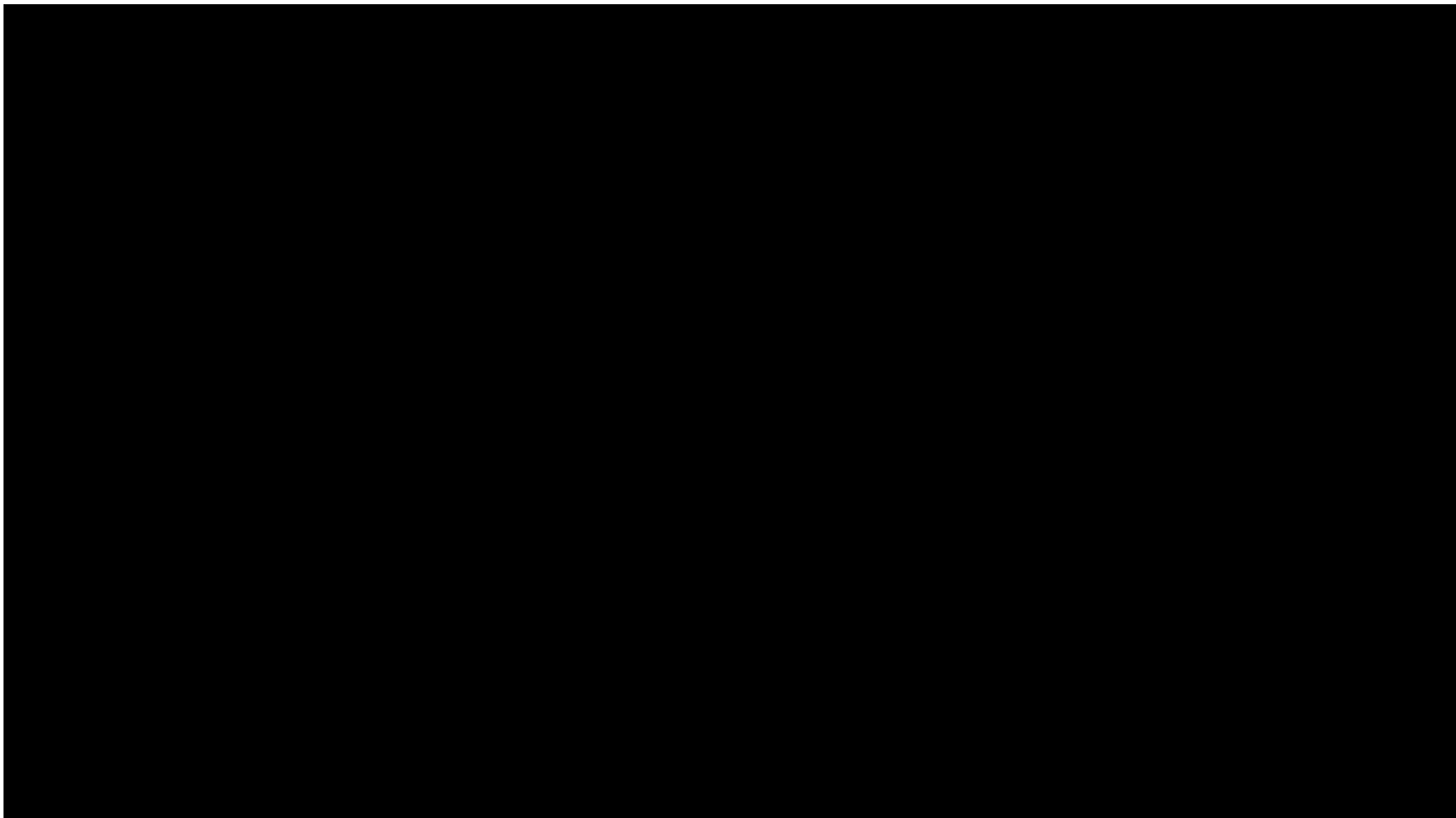


Defining a Critical Conversation

A discussion between two or more people where:

- Stakes are high
- Opinions vary
- Emotions run strong
- The outcome greatly impacts the lives of the participants





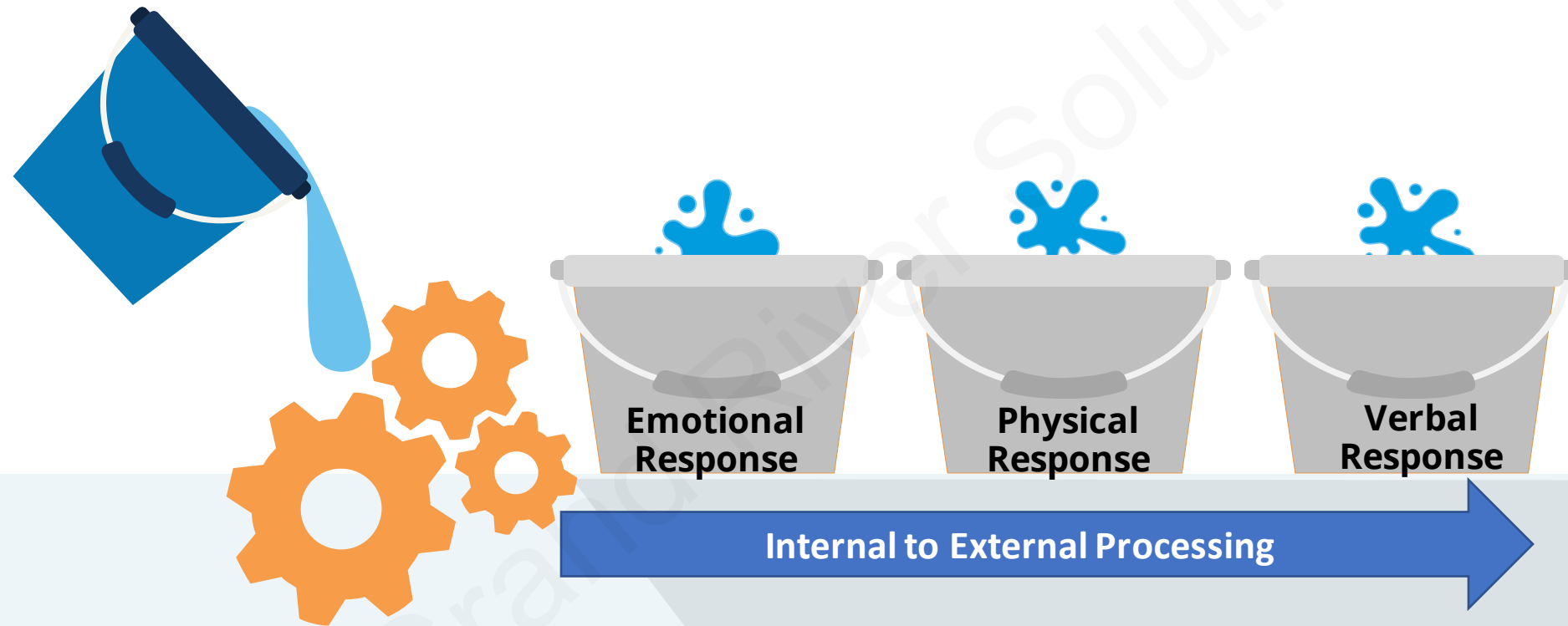


The Communication System

02



The Communication System





NAME THAT FEELING!



I'm Joy.



Emotional Response System



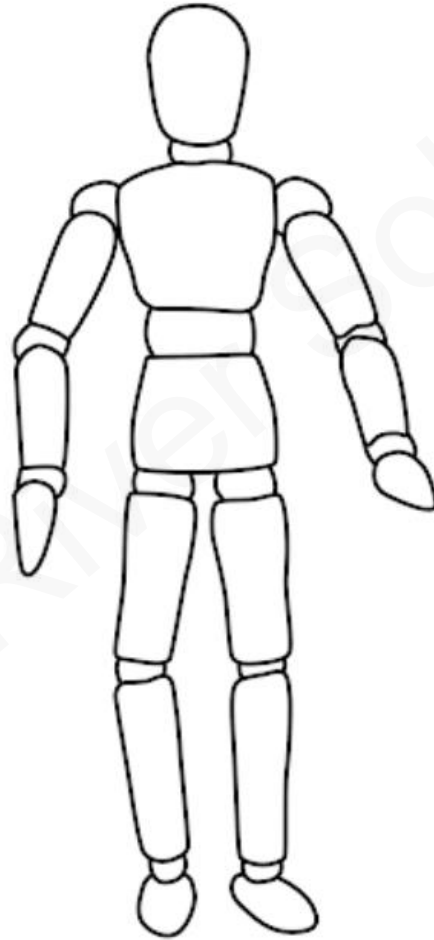
Logical Response System



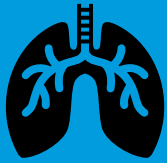
A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt is shown from the chest up. The person's hands are clasped together in front of their chest. A bright red, glowing light emanates from the heart area, creating a warm, ethereal glow that spreads across the chest and upper arms. The background is dark, making the glowing heart and the person's shirt stand out.

A PHYSICAL RESPONSE

When you are in distress where do you feel it in your body?



Physical Responses to Distress



**Breathing
Quickens**



**Heart Rate
increases**



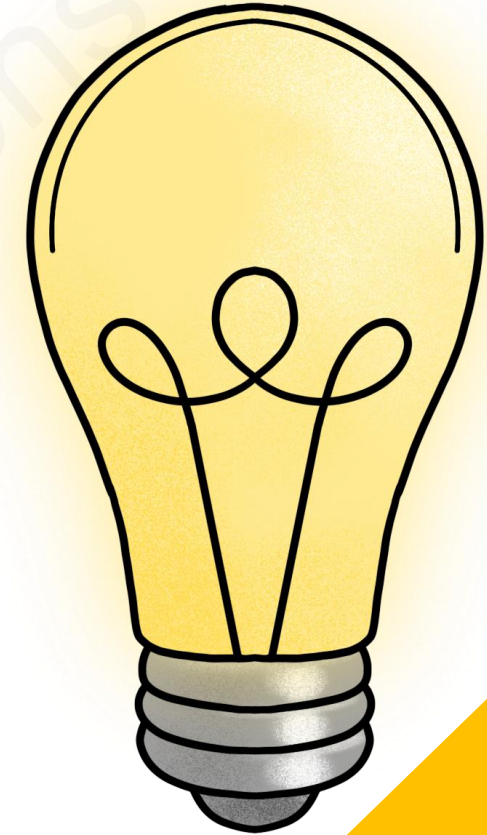
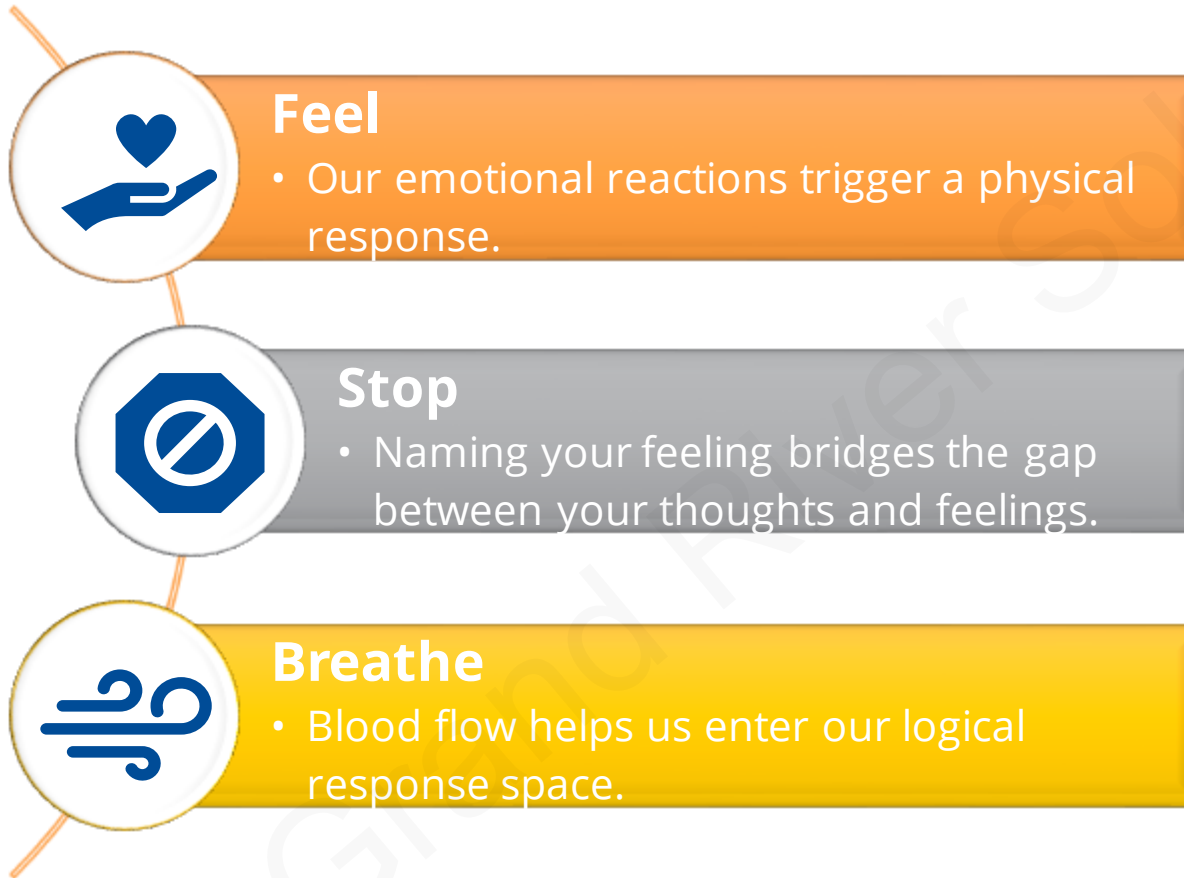
**Pit in the
Stomach**

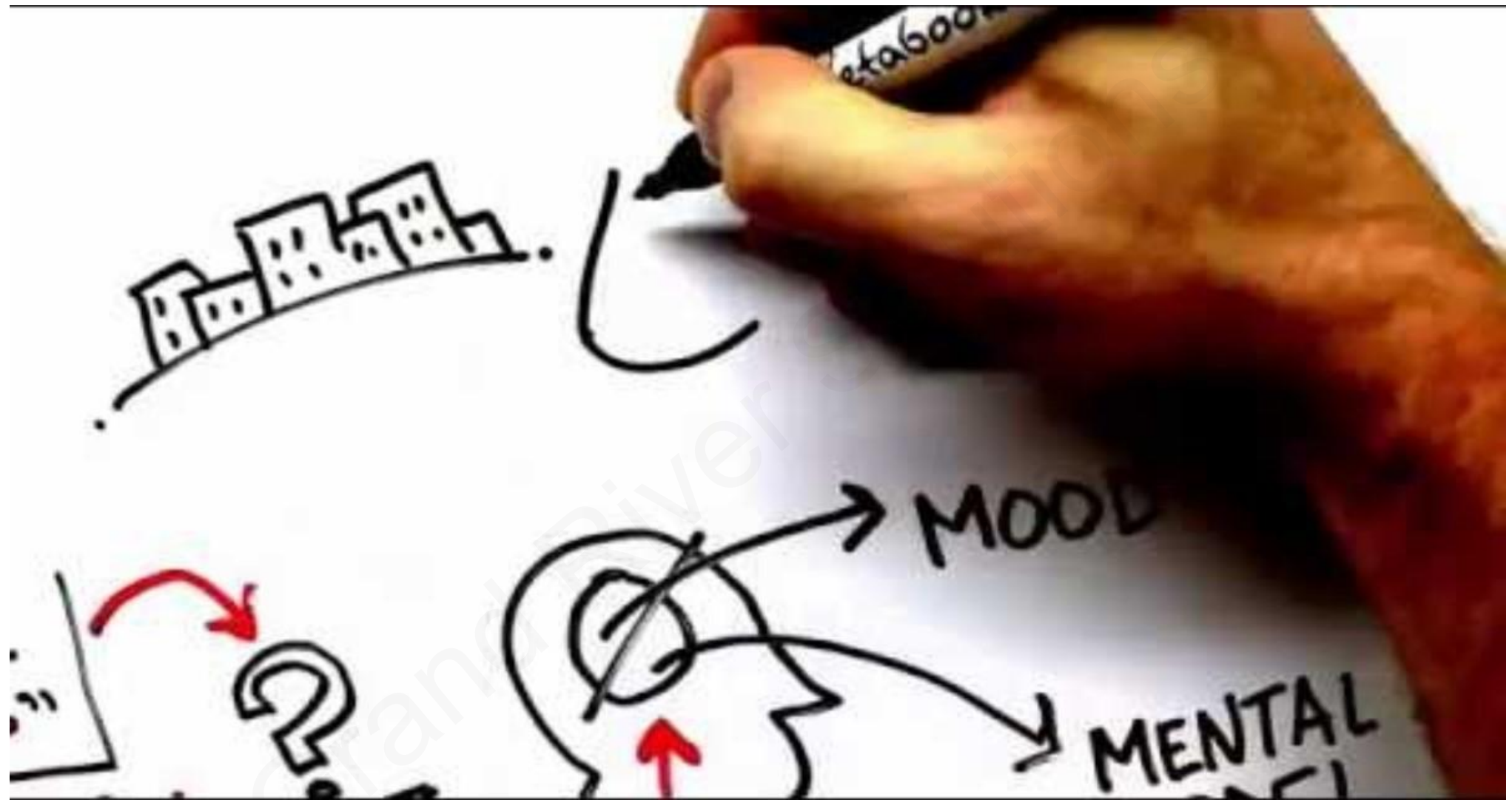


**Sweaty
Palms**



FSB Strategy



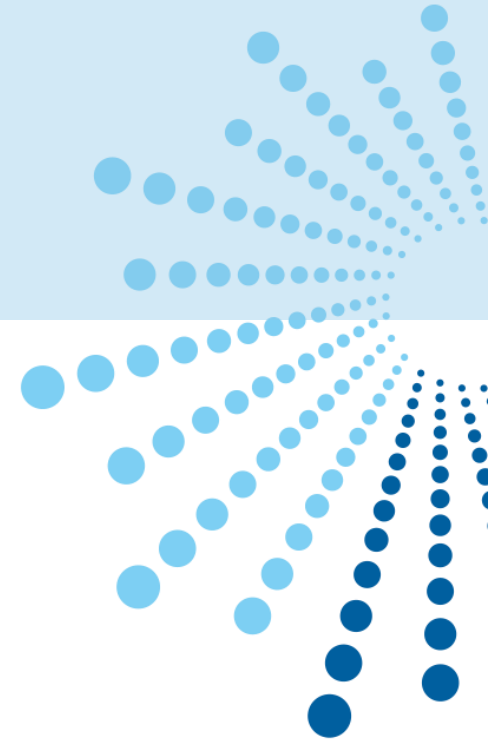




Critical Conversation Response Toolkit

Strategies to improve our responses.

03



Preparing For Your Conversation



1. Clearly identify conversation goals.
 - Why would they oppose?
 - Why would they agree?
 - What questions might they have for you?
 - What questions do you have for them?
2. Think through “if-then” scenarios.
 - Ex. “If they respond emotionally, I will slow down the conversation for clarity.”
3. Assess your commonalities.
 - What do you both want from this exchange?

Ineffective Conversation Goals



I want to be
right/win!



I want to look
good or save face!



I want to avoid
conflict!



I want to find fault,
punish, or blame!



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Effective Conversation Goals



INFLUENCE



INFORM



IMPROVE

5 Change Superpowers



The Power of Stories



The Power of Variety



The Power of Emotions



The Power of Resistance



The Power of Support

Are you the right MESSENGER?

Does it take a lot for you
and the stakeholder to
get on the same page?

Have you significantly
contributed or impacted
the decision-making
process of this
stakeholder in the past?

Have you proven to this
stakeholder you care
about their success?



Stakeholder Buy-In



Building Trust



Preferred
Communication
Channels

Phone

Email

In-Person

Text



Stakeholder Priorities



Connect Common Goals

Signs you are TRUSTED

You are not
micromanaged

You are a
sounding board

Your opinion is
highly valued

You are given or
mentioned for
new opportunities

You are included
in confidential
discussions

People are not
afraid to ask for
your help

Active Listening Techniques



Ask questions to clarify what is said.



Check your understanding by repeating or paraphrasing what you think you heard.



Listen to the entire point without interrupting.



Give the speaker time to think as well as talk.



Give yourself time to think before responding.

Dimensions of Response

Call Out

- When you want to fight
- Showcases someone's flaws
- Can cause folks to shutdown
- Creates competition (who is more right)
- Inhibits learning and behavior change

Call In

- When you want to talk
- Person must stay curious
- Invite folks into the conversation
- Remain humble (you might be wrong)
- Lead with empathy (learned skill)

Call On

- When you challenge folks to be better
- Calling on people asks them to be better
- Slows things down for reflection
- Asks folks to consider their values
- Is this the next version of you?

Calling In Statements

I'm curious. What was your intention when you said that?

How might the impact of your words/actions differ from your intent?

What sort of impact do you think your decision/comment/action might have?

How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone might misinterpret your words/actions?

Why do you think that is the case? Why do you believe that to be true?

Why did the result or response cause a problem for you?



Case Studies:

Real conversations in real time

04



Conversations With People Who Hate Me

Podcast

- Dylan Marron began a podcast to speak to people who left him hateful comments on YouTube.
- His goal was to understand their perspectives and have meaningful conversations with them.
- As we listen write down any phrases you view as helpful for conducting critical conversations.



Facts Over Feelings

**CONVERSATIONS
WITH PEOPLE WHO
HATE ME**



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Engaging in a Critical Conversation

- What are your initial reactions?
- What are your observations of the caller's responses?
- What are your observations of the podcaster's responses?



'WORLDS APART'

Engaging in a Critical Conversation

- What are your initial reactions?
- What worked in getting them to communicate?
- Why do you think they stayed?
- What makes this difficult to do in the real world?



Find Your P.A.C.E



If It All Goes Left!

Don't jump back in. Reminder - Pause for Pain

Admit when you are wrong.

Acknowledge negative impact and apologize.

Don't beat yourself up.

Commit to trying again.

Reflection Guide for Critical Conversations

What I Heard	What I Believe	What I Know	What I Learned	How I Feel
What were things that stood out to you during the discussion?	Describe what you believe about this topic and the person you spoke to.	What evidence do you have or need to assert your beliefs about this topic and person?	What is something new you learned during the discussion?	How did you feel during the discussion?

WE ALL NEED TO



H EALTHY

E XCHANGES

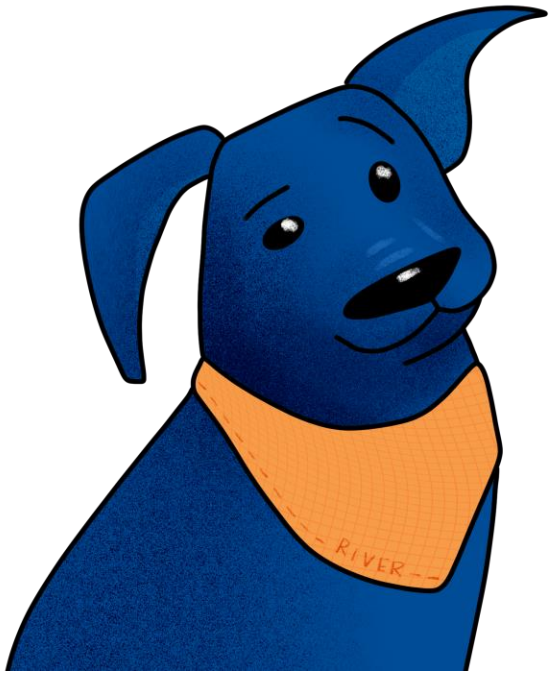
A MEND

L OSS

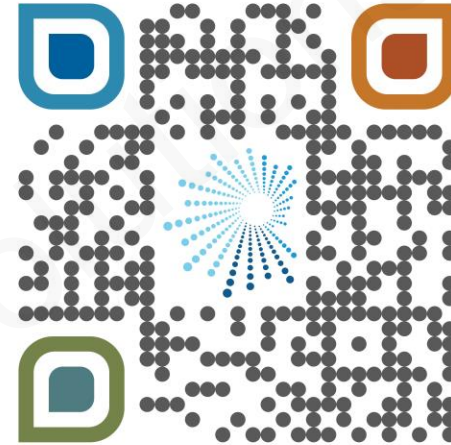
Respect
Value
Humanity

Consequence
Credibility
Dignity

Questions?



Leave Us Feedback:



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