

Difficult Conversations

The COURAGE Method for Hard Discussions

"Live with Purpose. Lead with Heart."

*"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
b George Bernard Shaw*

The Conversation Success Formula

CLARITY + COURAGE + COMPASSION = BREAKTHROUGH CONVERSATIONS

C Clarify Your Purpose

Know your "why" before you speak. What outcome do you want? Relationship repair? Behavior change? Understanding?

O Observe Without Judgment

Start with facts, not interpretations. "I noticed..." rather than "You always..." keeps defenses down.

U Understand Their Perspective

Ask "Help me understand..." Listen for their truth, not just their words. Seek first to understand.

R Remain Calm & Centered

Breathe deeply. Speak slowly. When emotions rise, the conversation often dies. Stay grounded.

A Acknowledge Their Feelings

"I can see this is important to you." Validation doesn't mean agreement, but it builds connection.

G Generate Solutions Together

Move from blame to solutions. Ask "What would it look like if..." and "How can we..." to create shared ownership.

E End with Clear Next Steps

Summarize agreements. Confirm who does what by when. Schedule follow-up if needed.

BONUS: The 24-Hour Rule

When emotions are high, wait 24 hours before having the conversation. This prevents reactive responses and allows for thoughtful preparation.

Fear vs. Courage in Difficult Conversations

Fear-Based Responses

- Avoiding the conversation entirely
- Attacking their character
- Making assumptions about intent
- Giving ultimatums
- Bringing up past issues
- Talking over them

Courage-Based Responses

- Addressing issues directly and kindly
- Focusing on specific behaviors
- Asking about their perspective
- Offering choices and options
- Staying present-focused
- Listening actively

Your Difficult Conversation Prep Sheet

Conversation Partner: _____

Main Issue (facts only): _____

Desired Outcome: _____

Opening Statement: "I'd like to talk about _____ because _____"

My Commitment: I will stay calm, listen actively, and focus on solutions.

Ready to Master Difficult Conversations?

Download more communication resources, book a keynote, or explore coaching at drtimcrowley.com

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