



Speak the Truth Without Making People Angry

Why we care: Keeping tough conversations free from emotional distraction allows people to really hear your words (what you say actually goes into their ears) so they take accountability and make the desired behavioral changes. The Speak the Truth quiz (found in the webinar slides) rates your current skills at inviting in constructive dialogue and helps to identify areas of opportunity for improving these critical communication skills.

What we can do: Avoid Conversations that are **attacking, pleading, disintegrating, shirking, soft pedaling**, or that include **“compliment sandwiches”** (a criticism sandwiched between two compliments that results in cognitive dissonance).

Avoid **“Trigger words”** that instantly make people defensive (“you” language that attacks, adverbs and absolutes that exaggerate the facts, and negations and negative emotions).

Avoid **I-R-E.**: Interpretations: (“Bob’s memo has errors; he ignored everything I said.”), emotional Reactions: (“I’m really irritated at Bob.”), and desired Ends: (“I’m going to call Bob in here and tell him that for the next two months I need to proofread every single thing he writes”).

Instead: Take ownership of the **facts** with the **FIRE** model. This strips out the **I-R-E** and leaves only the **Facts** resulting in communications that are candid, objective, specific, timely and unemotional and so encourage behavioral change to happen: (“Sally, yesterday there were two typos in your memo...”). Then listen for the corrective leap: (Sally says: “I know exactly how that happened and I know how to not do it again”).

I.D.E.A.L.S.: the foundation script used in most tough conversations to open up a dialogue with employees who have moderate self-awareness, The I.D.E.A.L.S. conversation (which takes seconds to have) focuses on the facts, establishes accountability, and looks forward (and not backward) to find solutions:

Step 1: Invite them to partner: <i>“Would you be willing to have a conversation with me about _____ (insert the facts)?”</i> (99% of people will say “yes” making them an equal participant in the conversation.)
Step 2: Disarm yourself: <i>“I’d like to review the situation to make sure I’m on the same page as you.”</i> (This reinforces the partnership. Note: Use “I” and not “we” (“we” usually means “you”).
Step 3: Eliminate blame: <i>“And if we have different perspectives, we can discuss that and develop a plan for moving forward.”</i>
Step 4: Affirm their choices: <i>“Does that sound OK? I can talk now, or if necessary, I have time later today.”</i> (Suggests an element of control.)
Step 5: List corrective feedback (just the facts) and listen to determine whether or not they’ve made a corrective leap. (Once the leap is made, stop talking about the issues and start focusing on solutions.)
Step 6: Synchronize your understanding: <i>“Tell me how you think we can work together to build on this and make things even more effective next time.”</i>

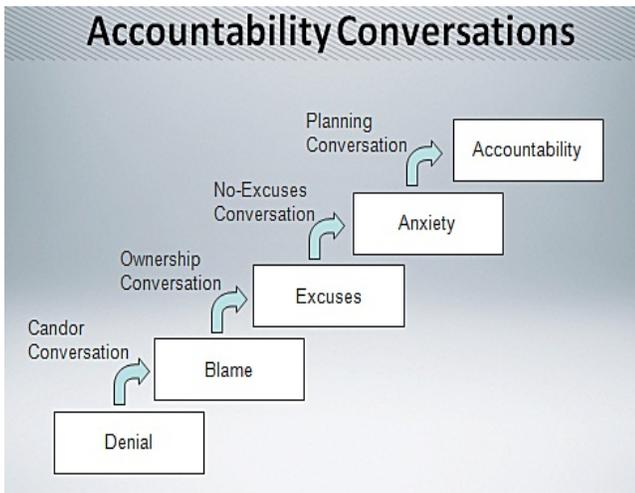
C.D.: (Constructive Dialogue) Use this script with high performers that have high levels of self-awareness:

Step 1: Get their buy-in to discuss: <i>“Is now a good time to review?”</i>
Step 2: Next ask: <i>“What were your proudest parts of _____ (the meeting, project, customer interaction, etc.)?”</i>
Step 3: Allow them to self-correct: <i>“If you could go back and do it again, what parts would you do differently?”</i>
Step 4: Move into a coaching conversation: <i>“Tell me how we can work together to make things even better next time.”</i>

C.A.L.M.: Use this no-holds barred (but non-aggressive) script with difficult employees who have low levels of critical self-awareness (as evidenced by blame, excuses, defensiveness, lack of accountability, no corrective leap):

Step 1: <u>C</u>oolly state the facts: <i>“Bob, I’ve gotten written reports of 3 comments made last week about 5 employees. The comments were negative and they include the following _____ (insert comments).”</i>
Step 2: <u>A</u>void blame by saying: <i>“The history is unimportant. Going forward, there won’t be any more comments like this.”</i>
Step 3: <u>L</u>ook for roadblocks: <i>“Is there anything that might prevent you and me from going forward productively?”</i>
Step 4: <u>M</u>anage expectations: <i>“I appreciate you taking the time to talk and your assistance with this issue.”</i>

What if I get a negative reaction? If you use the above scripts correctly and still receive a negative reaction, there are four Accountability Conversations that focus on the facts and help people move past the stages of denial, blame, excuses and anxiety to reach accountability:



The Candor Conversation: moves people past denial by focusing on reality with no sugarcoating, no hyperbole; just the truth.

The Ownership Conversation: moves people away from fixing blame and onto fixing the issue: “Let’s focus on what we can control.”

The No Excuses Conversation: Moves past excuses: “I’m not blaming you or anyone else, so let’s simply solve the problem.”

The Planning Conversation: Addresses anxiety by making issues easier to tackle: “If this is too much or too hard, let’s break it into bite-sized pieces.”

Summary: Fact-based conversations allow you to speak candidly without making people angry so you can turn tough conversations into coaching conversations that result in positive behavioral change. Applying the FIRE model strips conversations of Interpretation, emotional Reaction and desired Ends (I-R-E) and keeps discussion focused on the Facts. If you do all this and still get negative reactions (denial, blame, excuses or anxiety) use the four Accountability Conversations to redirect to a highly productive conversation.

Tip: Everyone slips up occasionally and says the wrong thing. Get back on track with the **A.D.S.** script: **Apologize:** “I’m sorry” (that’s all you have to say). **Disarm** and explain yourself: “I messed up and chose some bad words that sounded like I was attacking you which is not what I intended.” And **Step back:** “Can I try this again?”