Managing Difficult Conversations

Course Manual

Managing Difficult Conversations

From time to time everyone will face conversations which they anticipate will be difficult and which they may feel ill-equipped to handle – you are no different.

Scenarios of this kind include: addressing under- or poor performance, tackling instances of unacceptable behaviour, investigating reports of bullying, giving developmental feedback, turning down employee requests, dealing with sensitive personal issues, handling a grievance or disciplinary process, telling an employee that their job is at risk of redundancy or a client that they can't have something they wanted.

Instigating a difficult conversation can feel daunting and there is a natural tendency for people to delay taking action in the hopes that the issue will be resolved without their intervention.

But this is rarely the case. Procrastination won't make problems disappear and in fact, if issues are ignored they are likely to escalate and become even more difficult to resolve, causing negative consequences both for all those involved and for the wider organisation.

It is far better to tackle problems at an early stage as this can help to nip problems in the bud, prevent the situation from deteriorating and maintain good working relationships with colleagues.

We all tend to put off difficult conversations because of the intensity and complexity of the emotions they arouse – both for the manager initiating the conversation and for the person they are speaking with.

Managing Difficult Conversations

Fear of how people will react and whether you will be able to handle their reactions, feelings of vulnerability or concern about a loss of control can make us all reluctant to raise an issue face to face.

You may even be concerned that you will not be supported by senior managers, your HR department and/or other colleagues if you take steps to address sensitive issues.

However, by adopting the right approach, preparing yourself carefully and developing the right skills, mindset and behaviour, you will be able maximise your ability to handle the conversation effectively and steer it to a successful conclusion acceptable to all involved.

What is a Difficult Conversation?

A difficult conversation is one whose primary subject matter is potentially contentious and/or sensitive and may elicit strong, complex emotions that can be hard to predict or control.

How To Have A Difficult Conversation

Process

1. Determine the purpose of the conversation

2. Adopt the right approach

3. Recognise and manage your emotional state

4. Challenge you own assumptions and beliefs

5. Plan the exchange

6. Provide an opportunity for preparation

7. Open the conversation

8. Present your side of the story

9. Listen to their side of the story

10. Handle reactions with care

11. Find the middle ground and reach an amicable solution

The Right Approach

MACE **- From Quaestus Consulting LLP**

An individual, or a team of people, may not perform a job or task in the way that you wanted them to. There are four major factors which could determine this:

Motivation: Is the team member motivated to do the task? Someone is more likely to meet your requirement if they can see what is in it for them, appreciate the bigger picture of how their

task fits in, are consulted and involved, are given responsibility and have their performance positively recognised. There may also be an external non-work related factor that could be affecting their performance.

Ability: The team member may lack the knowledge, skills or experience that is required to meet the standards or deadlines for the task. They may also lack the behavioural skills to effectively influence situations as required in their roles.

Constraints: The team member may have other constraints which you are not aware of. They may have some conflicting priorities, other demands which they are expected to meet as well as yours. This can be a common factor influencing performance if your team member is part of several project teams or has more than one team leader they report to.

Expectations: The team member may not have been clear about what you expected from them. As the team leader, it is your responsibility to set clear goals and be clear about the standards and deadlines required. It may also be possible that you should have set regular review meetings to ensure that standards and deliverables were being met. In setting regular review meetings you would also have the opportunity to provide on-going coaching to your team member about the performance issue.

Confidentiality

Generally, when people confide in you it implies that you will treat the information with respect and keep it confidential.

This puts you in a position of trust. However, it is important to negotiate the boundaries of confidentiality with colleagues – there will be times when you will feel the need to share information with others.

If someone asks you to keep a secret you need to be sure of the content before you can agree. In general, when helping someone, you should respect their desire for privacy.

This means that:
You should not gossip about them with others.
You should keep any notes from the meeting under lock and key.

You should explain to them the circumstances in which you might need to breach their confidentiality.
You should encourage them to disclose the information to someone who can help before you do so yourself.

In general you should only disclose private information if you believe that:
The person is at risk of harm (mentally or physically).
The person is putting others at risk of harm.
The person is in severe breach of company regulations.
The person is in severe breach of the law.

Interaction Engineering: The action of working artfully to create something of value when two or more people communicate with each other.
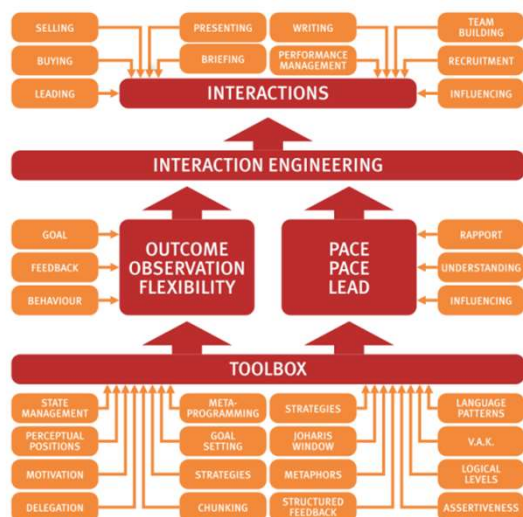
Interactions

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, an interaction is "an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other".

In a business sense, interactions happen almost all the time. These interactions all have consequences. The better the interaction, the better the results.

We utilise some key processes to help you get better results.

Processes

These processes have been adapted from Neuro-Linguistic Programming and are exceptionally effective when used in conjunction with the tools and techniques described below.

Outcome, Observation, Flexibility

Having a clear goal in mind helps you to improve an interaction. How you set that goal is crucial and puts you at an advantage.

Looking and listening carefully helps you to get the feedback you need to understand whether you are getting close to your outcome or not. You do need to know what to listen or look for though.

Having flexibility in your behaviour means that you are able to change your approach to help you achieve your outcome.

Pace, Pace, Lead

It is much easier to lead someone to an outcome than to push or force them there.

You are much more likely to buy something from someone you like, than someone you don't like. We like people who we have a rapport with so you need to build and maintain rapport with the person you are interacting with. This is the first "Pace".

The Second "Pace" requires you to demonstrate that you understand what it is like for them in their world.

Only when you have rapport and understanding can you lead a person or group of people to the outcomes you are looking for.

Interaction Engineering
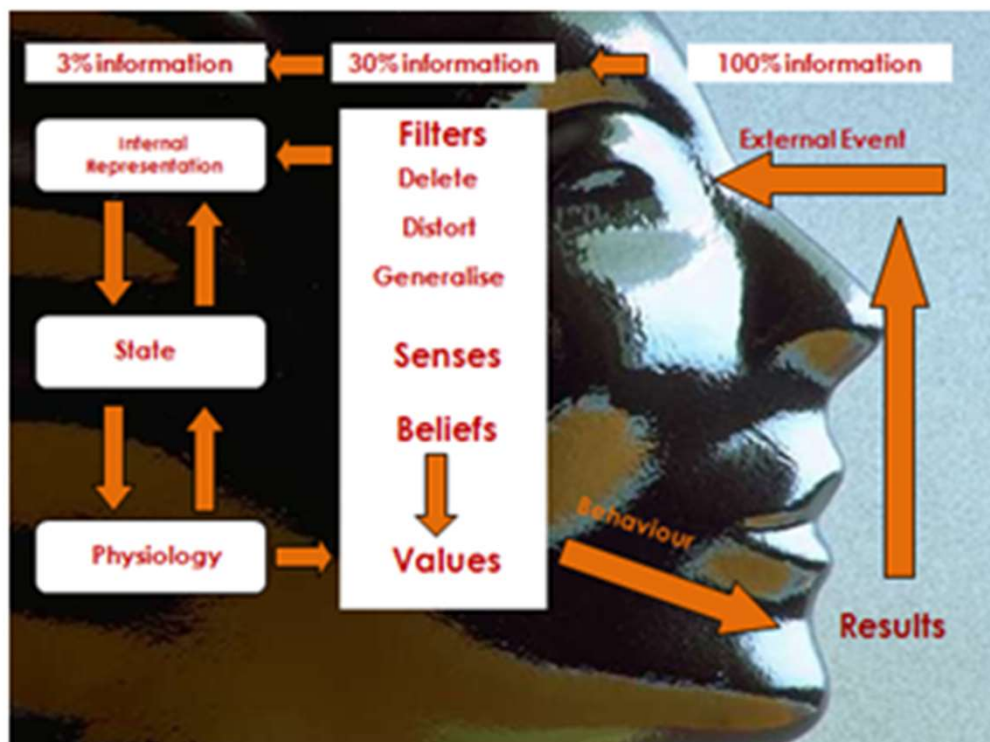
How To Develop Rapport

The people we have rapport with are the people who's 'map of the world' overlaps ours to some degree. The greater the overlap, the more rapport we naturally have. Rapport isn't about being friends or friendly though. You can have rapport with someone you don't get on with. You can also have rapport with someone you don't agree with, or not have rapport with someone you do agree with. Rapport can also be created very quickly and lost very quickly. It has to be maintained and is a dynamic process which is more usefully seen as a dance, rather than a step by step process with a beginning and an end.

Rapport is crucial to the success of Coaching. Without rapport, it is very unlikely that you will be successful in achieving a 'win win' outcome.

It is, as already mentioned, unlikely that you are like everyone else in the world, but you can **be like** anyone you meet.

Building and maintaining rapport involves stepping out of your world and into the world of the other person. This is called 'Pacing' It is almost as if you are walking alongside someone else at their pace. Once you are pacing them, it is easier to lead them to where you want them to be. People are unlikely to be led until they have been paced.

Building Rapport
The key to building rapport is 'matching'. By this we mean that you are stepping out of your world and entering the other's. It is possible to match on every level and is something you do naturally with people you already have a rapport with.

Behaviour
On a fairly superficial level, we attempt to match people's behaviour on first meeting by finding out what we can about them and demonstrating our own experience in that field.

For instance, you might, on meeting someone for the first time ask if they've been on holiday if they look particularly tanned or relaxed.

On hearing that they have just been to Crete, you might ask where they stayed because you were there last year. You will continue this line of conversation demonstrating how much you have in common and how **like** the other person you are.

When you are in a restaurant, look around at the people you believe are getting on well. You will notice that their movements and gestures match each other's. If you can look closely enough, you will notice that their blinking rates match and they even breathe in unison.

Watch a group of people leaning on the bar in a pub. They will often have the same foot on the bar rail, they will drink at the same time and laugh together.

As all behaviour is communication, in the sense that we are always sending out a message with our behaviour, there are three key areas of behaviour to match which will tell the other person "I'm like you". Logically, if you're like me, I will like you and will be much more likely to be influenced by you, so the more you can be like me (while still maintaining your own identity).

These three areas are: Body Language, Tone of Voice and Words.

Body Language

We are more influenced by body language than we are usually aware.

Have you ever walked into a room, seen someone and thought, "They look alright, I'll go and talk to them" or, "I don't like the look of them, I'm staying well away". What did you base that decision on when they hadn't said anything to you?

You based that opinion on their body language. You looked at them and made a generalisation based on your own experience of someone who looked like them in your past. This took place in your unconscious and happened extremely quickly.

Matching someone's body language sends a very strong message to the other person's unconscious that "I am like you"

So to create rapport by matching body language you need to match:

Posture

Gestures

Facial Expressions

Breathing

Blinking

Eye Movements

Body Space

Building Rapport

A Word of warning: If someone is talking and moving their arms around a lot, its probably not a good idea to match them at the same time. Waving your arms around when you are listening is not something that most people do and the other person will become aware of your matching them. When something unusual or unexpected happens with someone else's body language, we become aware of it at a conscious level and this will almost certainly break rapport. It is better in this instance to match their arm waving when it is your turn to speak.

Also, don't match nervous twitches. Most people are unaware that they do it themselves so they will be very aware of your twitch.

Tone of Voice

Have you ever found yourself, when speaking to someone from elsewhere in the country, speaking with the same regional accent as them, even when it is not your accent? This is a natural process of rapport building, just as the matching of Body Language is.

It is not necessary to 'put on' an accent as this is often noticed as being false.

In fact, what is happening when you have rapport is that the person you are talking with has modified their language, you have modified your language, and you have met somewhere in the middle.

The best thing is to match:

Speed of speaking

Rhythm of speech

Volume

Timbre (quality – richness of speech)

Pauses

Idiosyncrasies (sniffs, clearing the throat, 'erms' etc)

Words

The words people use to describe their thoughts and communicate their ideas are unique to them.

Words themselves have no meaning other than that which we put on them. If I ask you to think of a table, what comes to mind? It could be the table you are sat at now, or the dining room table at home, or the white plastic patio table in the garden, or next year's projected sales figures. There are many regional variations of words to describe situations.

Active Listening

Listening is at the core of coaching. Without good listening skills your client will not FEEL heard, and this feeling of being heard is vital.

We all know people who appear to listen, but we always know whether this is genuine. So you, as a coach must have, or develop, the skill of listening, and showing that you have listened.

NB: listening does NOT mean agreeing. We constantly hear people accusing the government of not listening, but what they really mean is not agreeing. This is different, and luckily it will not matter to your client what you think as it is not your job to make changes to their lives: that is their job!

Many people believe that listening is something we do automatically; unless we are hearing impaired we each spend a large part of the working day listening to other people talk. However, if we were to ask those same people whether they feel truly listened to they may give a different answer.

Active listening is not just something we do automatically but is a skill that can be learned.

A good listener will be aware of the speaker's:
Choice of words
Tone of voice
Body language
A good listener will:
Work hard to build rapport
Take the necessary time to listen
Employ a range of questioning techniques
Genuinely try to understand
Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour
Paraphrase regularly
Demonstrate understanding
Use eye contact effectively

Active Listening

In general we want more from a listener than just their physical presence. How many times have you tried to talk to someone who is quite simply more involved with their computer screen than they are with you?

Call to mind someone who doesn't listen to you, think about what you dislike about his or her behaviour and make sure that you don't do it yourself.

Words

Listen carefully to what the other person is saying; don't jump to conclusions before they have finished talking. The choice of words will also give you some indication of how strongly he or she feels about the subject matter. Remember, the words used can also give you a clue to the other person's representational system thus enabling you to "speak their language" when you respond.

Tone of Voice

Tune in to the tone of voice you are hearing, it will help you to pick up on the emotional content of the message. The person opposite you may be telling you that he/she is quite happy to work late but the tone of voice could be telling you something else. Reflect this back to them and check out if your suspicions are right.

E.g.   You are telling me that you don't mind working late tonight but you sound quite angry. Is that how you feel?

Body Language (Non-verbal Communication)

Observing a person's body language can give us clues to how a person is feeling and can show us evidence of an imbalance between their words and their meaning. However, the observation of body language is not an exact science and you should always be cautious about diagnosing.

Remember to match Body language as part of your continual focus on rapport.

Eye Contact

Good eye contact is an essential part of active listening. Focussing your eyes on another person's shows that you are giving them your undivided attention. However, unbroken, staring eye contact can be threatening and invasive. Good eye contact will be broken regularly by flicking the focus away from and back to your colleague.

Summarising

Summarising is stating back to the client the essence of what they have just told you, by picking out the most important elements.

For example

Client: "My boss called me into the office, told me to sit down and just glared at me all the time he was finishing his phone call. I was getting really nervous. Then he just launched into a tirade about how my work wasn't good enough and that if I had to have a sick child then I should make sure there was someone there to look after it as I was letting him down. He went on and on and on. He made me feel really small and I found I couldn't stand up for myself so I just snivelled a sorry and it wouldn't happen again and went into the loo and cried."

Coach: "So, just sitting and waiting started you feeling nervous and then you just felt worse and worse until you couldn't answer back?"

Client: "That's right, I was trampled under foot and I need to stop that happening"

Summarising:

Demonstrates attention and understanding
Lets the client know he/she has been heard
Aids clarity for coach and client
Keeps the encounter focused
Reassures by validation
Keeps the flow going
Gives the client a chance to correct, a feedback for accuracy
Allows insight and shift of perspective
Allows for greater self-awareness for the client
Aids awareness of client's perspective for the coach
Gives space and pace
Enables the client to adjust, expand and find what's important

It is important to become aware of the value of asking questions. You will find that the vast majority of clients are very happy to be asked what may appear at first glance to be rather intrusive questions (in fact you will also find that as you get used to asking questions, so you will do so more in your everyday life: and strangely, it is rare that people object!) .

Questions can be used:

To help get started

For elaboration

To get clearer

To get to the specifics

To bring the client to now

To focus on the client, not others

To focus on feelings, not facts

To encourage responsibility

NOT

Filling in silence

For own interest

For making suggestions/ possibilities/ comment/ judgement

For a conversation

Closed Questions It can be very frustrating when the person we are talking to gives one- word answers to every question asked. However the fault may lie more with the questioner than with the respondent. Closed questions can usually only be answered with a simple yes or no.

E.g.   Did you come by car? If the respondent answers "yes" then you have your information but if the respondent answers "no" then you have to ask a further question (or 5) in order to find out how they travelled.

An open question will get you more information but the closed question does have a role. Sometimes a simple "yes" or "no" is all that is required, especially if you are simply checking your understanding of the situation or summarising what has been said so far.

E.g.   John: "Jane asked me to type up some reports for her but I had to say "no" because I was already working on something important for you. She got a bit upset with me because she thought her work was more important."

            Emma: "Did you explain to her what my work was?"

John: "Yes."

Questioning

Open questions

Open questions are used to draw out more information on a subject and are designed to encourage the speaker to elaborate. Open questions typically start with the words who, why, where, what, when or how.

E.g. How did you get here today?

This leaves the respondent free to tell you in his / her own words about the morning's journey.

Sometimes open questions can seem a little interrogatory; be especially careful with the use of questions beginning "why?"

E.g. "Why did you do that?" may get you the information that you need but set the tone wrong and it implies that you are allocating blame. A softer alternative would be "What was the thinking behind that?"

This will get you the same information without the defensive behaviour that may have accompanied it before.

I had six honest serving men

They taught me all I know.

*Their names are **what** and **why** and **when** and **how** and **where** and **who**.*

Rudyard Kipling

Leading Questions

The good listener rarely uses leading questions as these are really designed to ensure that someone agrees with your point of view.

E.g. When faced with the question "You think it's a good idea don't you?" it is very hard to say no. If you really want to know what someone thinks ask them an open question: "What do you think about this idea?"

Hypothetical Questions

Hypothetical questions can have a really important role in the active listener's repertoire. These are questions which allow the respondent to consider an approach to a situation in a non-threatening way. They are especially useful in recruitment interviews when you are exploring issues outside the respondent's current expertise. Hypothetical questions are often phrased "What if?".

E.g. If you were managing this team, what would you do to motivate people?

Questioning

Probing Questions

Probing is useful when someone is giving you incomplete information or when you think that perhaps the issue has not been thought through. They allow the respondent to consider their options more fully without you having to give advice.

E.g.   What do you think would happen if…?

        Can you tell me more about…?

        What are the potential repercussions of taking that action?

Reflective Questions

Reflecting is useful when someone is giving you incomplete information or when it would be useful for them to think more deeply about the situation. The technique is simply to reflect what has been said to you, but as a question.

E.g.   You: Do you understand that?

Respondent: I understand most of it

You: Most of it?

Summary

Above all active listening is not simply about listening but about showing that we are listening. We have now seen some key ways of conveying that we are actively listening, however, a word of caution is in order; the best way to show that we are listening is to be genuinely interested in what our colleagues have to say. It's easy to spot a fraud!

Some Useful Questions to Ask

How will you know at the end of the session that it was worthwhile having the session today?

How will you know when things are good enough for you to stop coaching?

Tell me about the times when it doesn't happen / happens less.

When does it bother you least?

What is different about those times?

You report being at 3 on a scale of 1 to 10. What is different that means you are at 3 not 1?

How will life look when you are at 10?

What are you doing to stop things getting worse?

Putting Yourself in Their shoes

Have you ever tried to put yourself in someone else's shoes and been unsuccessful? Have you ever tried to second guess the questions you will be asked at an interview? If you have, how accurate were you? Were you asked **all** the questions you expected, or were there some you really **weren't** expecting?

Does it sometimes surprise you just how different people's understanding of a situation really is?

Of course, everybody's perception of situation will be unique because they all have different 'maps of the world' based on their own experience, beliefs, values and ability to take information in and process it.

Would it be helpful If you could **really** understand the world from another person's viewpoint?

Understanding Perceptual Positions will help you to **really** put yourself in someone else's shoes and see the world through their eyes. Although we all attempt to do this at times, this process dramatically improves the quality of information we obtain.

People use Perceptual Positions to prepare for meetings, resolve relationship problems, plan presentations, market research and many other situations when seeing another viewpoint would help. It is even possible, with practice, to do this while you are actually talking to someone, or in the middle of a presentation.

Often, when we want to resolve an issue, or influence others we just jump in without any preparation and interact and react in an unconscious way. We then wonder why we are often unsuccessful.

Sometimes, to avoid these results, we prepare by trying to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and see the world their way.

The problem is that it is difficult to separate our own thoughts, beliefs and values from that of the person we are trying to understand. This means that our thoughts are confused with the other person's and we find it difficult to gain a clear insight into another map of the world.

Perceptual Positions helps to distinguish between our thoughts and that of the other person's. It also adds an extra dimension in the form of objective 'fly on the wall' observers.

If you have ever taken part in Role Play exercises on a course, and have had the opportunity to have the role of Observer, you will recognise the benefit of observing without having any emotional connection with the participants.

Perceptual Positions helps you to gather information from your own point of view, that of the other people involved in the interaction and from that of objective, uninvolved observers.

This information will help you to choose the most effective course of action – it increases your **flexibility.**
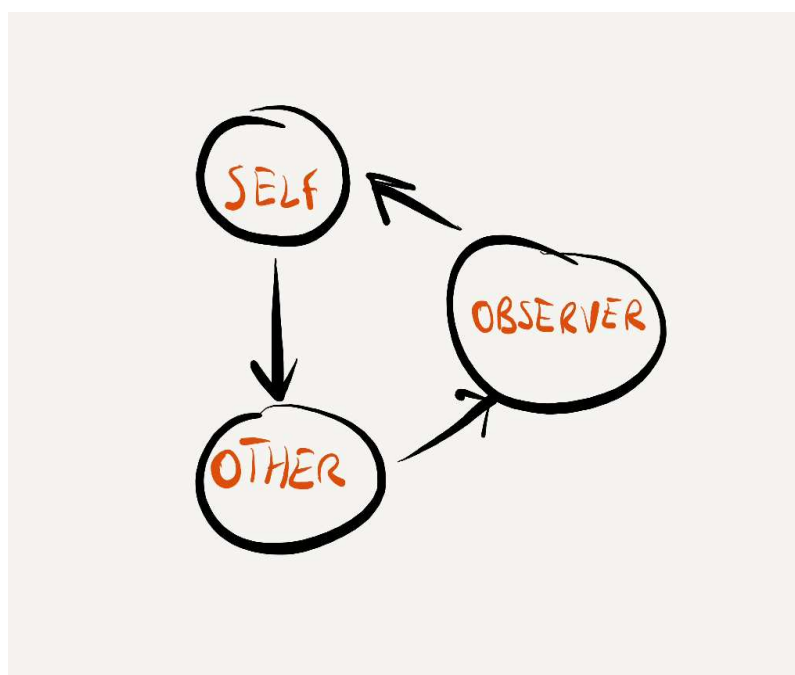
Perceptual Positions

A key component of this technique is the concept of **association** and **disassociation**.

Simply, when you are **associated** – you are experiencing a situation as if you were reliving what happened. You see the world through your own eyes, hearing what you really heard and feeling your own body state and the emotions you actually felt at the time.

When you are **disassociated –** you experience the situation as if you were an uninvolved, external observer, almost as if you were viewing yourself on a film.

Disassociation is often used to help people deal with distressing or painful situations. Once someone is disassociated, they no longer feel the feelings, being detached from them and so are more are more able to deal logically with the situation and hence find a workable solution.

We feel an emotional content in any event we experience and it therefore becomes very difficult for us to be objective. By disassociating from the event, it makes it possible for us to be more objective.
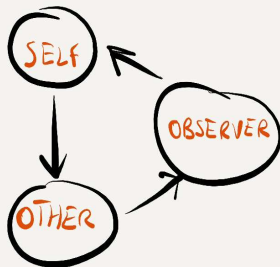
In any interaction, there is more than one person involved. Although we often attempt to see the situation from the other's viewpoint, we find it difficult to move from our associated position and so any thoughts will still contain an element of our own thoughts and emotions.

One of the ways disassociation can be facilitated more easily is by physically moving. We then literally and figuratively see the world from a different perspective. Some people find this is the only way to disassociate and is worth trying initially. You may find it easier to disassociate with practice.

It is often useful to disassociate from the situation completely and act as an objective observer. This helps you to understand what is going on within the interaction and can provide invaluable information.

It is possible (and often helpful) to disassociate a stage further and observe how the observer is observing

The Process

Step 1: Take position 1 – **Self**
This is often described the person being themselves.
Imagine the other person or people sitting or standing opposite you.
Think about the situation from your own point of view:
What are you thinking?
What beliefs do you have about the situation? What is important to you about it? What outcome do you want?
What are you saying? How are you saying it? What is your posture? What gestures are you making?
What do you see? What facial expression are they wearing? How are they standing or sitting? What gestures are they making?
What do you hear? What are they saying? How are they saying it? What words are they using?
How do you feel?

Step 2: Physically move to position 2 **- Other**
This position helps intuition – "By imagining inside one's own head what it is like to be in another's shoes allows our unconscious to come up with material that would not be available through conscious thought" This is still mind reading, but is a much more accurate way of mind reading than usual.
This position relies on a high degree of sensory acuity. The higher your sensory acuity, the more accurate your mind reading will be.
Take on the physical attributes you noticed in position one – facial expression, posture, tone of voice, movements.
Look back to position 1
Imagine seeing yourself sitting or standing there.
Think about the situation from the **other** person's point of view:
As the **other** person,
What do you see? What facial expression is the person in position 1 wearing? How are they sitting or standing? What gestures are they making?
What do you hear? What are they saying? How are they saying it? What words are they using?
How do you feel?
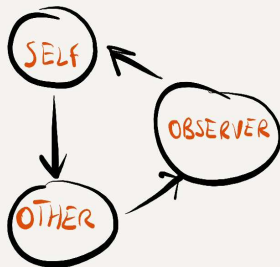
The Process

Physically move to position 3 – **Observer**
Imagine seeing the interaction from a completely disassociated, objective view – as if you are watching a film.
What do you see? How are they interacting/ what body language do you notice? Are they in or out of rapport?
What do you hear? What words are they using? What tone of voice are they using?
How do you feel?
**What thoughts come into your mind?**

Step 3: Move back to position 1 – **Self**
Take the information gained from position 2 and 3 back with you to position 1.
What new information do you have? What new thoughts do you have? What new feelings do you feel? What new insights do you have?
How are you going to use this new information? Are you going to do anything different as a result?

Experiment – try going through the cycle with your new behaviours and notice the difference.
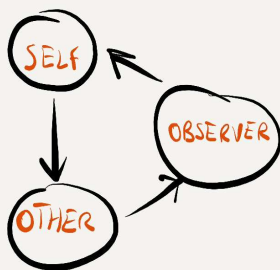
Assertiveness

Assertiveness is:

Assertiveness is based on a philosophy of personal responsibility and an awareness of the rights of other people.

Being assertive means:

Being honest with yourself and others
Having the ability to say directly what it is you want, need or feel, but not at the expense of other people
Having confidence in yourself and being positive understanding other people's points of view
Being able to behave in a rational and adult way
Being able to negotiate and reach workable compromises.

Above all, being assertive means having self respect and respect for other people.

Assertiveness is not:

Being assertive is not:

About getting your own way and winning every time
A series of quick fix tricks or techniques to learn parrot fashion and then trot out in difficult situations
A way to manipulate and manage other people so that you get your own way, whilst looking as though you are considering others

What are we doing when we are not being assertive?

If we are not being assertive then the chances are that we are behaving in a way which is either

Aggressive
Passive or
Passive / Aggressive

People behave in these ways because they have learned that they work for them – that there is a benefit in behaving this way. However, there are also many drawbacks.

Assertiveness

Respect

Essentially, assertive behaviour comes down to the simple issue of respect.

Assertiveness means I have equal respect for my needs and your needs.

Aggressiveness (means I have more respect for my needs than your needs.

Passivity means I have less respect for my needs than your needs.

Passive / Aggressiveness means I have little respect for my needs or your needs.

Rights and Responsibilities

So why do we choose not to behave assertively?

Usually because we like the benefits we get from behaving passively or aggressively.

Passive behaviour often stems from low self esteem which can lead us to focus more on our responsibilities to others than on our rights.
i.e I have less respect for my needs than for yours.

Aggressive behaviour means that we focus more on our rights than our responsibilities to others.
I.e. I have more respect for my needs than for yours.

Respect involves acknowledging that you have some basic rights as a human being.

For example the right to:

Say no
Ask for what you want.
Express your thoughts and feelings even when they seem illogical.
Make your own decisions.
Make mistakes.
Be heard.
Choose your level of involvement in any situation.
Succeed.
Be independent.
Be alone.
Change your mind.

How to Be More Assertive

There are 3 basic steps to behaving assertively:

Listen and show that you have understood.
Say what you think and feel.
Say what you want to happen next.

Step One

Forces you to focus on the other person and not use the time they are talking to build up a defence or attack. By really listening you are able to demonstrate some understanding and empathy for their situation, or point of view, even if you do not wholly agree with it.

Step Two

Enables you to directly state your thoughts or feelings without insistence or apology.

Step Three

Is essential so that you can indicate in a clear and straightforward way what action or outcome you want.

Structured Feedback

Structured Feedback

Generally speaking people don't know if they are doing well or doing badly if you don't tell them. If you are happy with a person's performance – tell them. If you are not happy – tell them. It is no good hoping that they will read your mind unless you have Derren Brown on your team!

Giving Negative Feedback

When we have to tell people something that we know they might find difficult or painful to hear we may have a number of concerns:

Will they get very upset, and if so how will we deal with that?
Will it affect the relationship we have with that person in a lasting way?
Will they really hear what we are saying or will they distort what we say?
Will it really have an effect on how they behave?

Will they get very upset, and if so how will we deal with it?

We often avoid telling people unpleasant things because it can sometimes make us feel bad when we do it, or sometimes we find it uncomfortable to have to cope with another person's distress or anger. An essential question to ask ourselves in this situation is 'can we afford not to give feedback?'

Failure to give feedback can result in:

No change in the person's behaviour because they have never been told that it is causing difficulties.
The potential for an enormous confrontation in the future as things build up beyond our control.
Problems in our continuing relationship with the person which naturally develop when we are aware of something and they are not, or when we are trying to keep something from them.

Giving feedback provides an opportunity for a person to change their behaviour.

Photo by Wade Austin Ellis on Unsplash

Will it affect the relationship we have with that person in any lasting way?

The short answer is that it might! This is always the risk. However, you can minimise this risk by:

Having a good relationship with your team members to begin with
Giving lots of positive feedback when it is deserved
Being fair and treating all team members alike
Giving negative feedback in a skilled way

Relationships are good because people work at them, and feedback can be constructive if we remember a few basic guidelines and if it is given within the context of a good relationship.

Will they hear what we are saying or will they distort what we say?

We can discover if we have been accurately heard by asking the person to paraphrase what we have said to them and by giving them an opportunity to comment on what we have said.

Will it really have an effect on how they behave?

This depends firstly on whether they accept the feedback or not. In the final analysis people must make their own decision whether or not to accept feedback given. If they do not accept the feedback it will be vital to clarify boundaries, contracts, condition of employment etc. In other words someone may not accept the feedback but if that means they refuse to make any behaviour changes the consequences of that will need to be clearly pointed out.

Sometimes the person accepts the feedback but then does nothing to change his/her behaviour. This will be because he/she left the feedback session without clear objectives to which he/she has committed himself/herself and no step-by-step action plan to enable him/her to implement those objectives.

Giving feedback is not an end in itself, but the beginning of a new agreement between two people.

The Process

Give the feedback in this way:

"When I see you..."
"When I hear you say..."

"I think.........."

"I feel.........."

"I recommend that you...   Start"
Stop"
Continue"

For Example
You have noticed that Phil is not wearing his hard hat today – this is the third time this month you have had to talk to him about it.
Phil
When I see you without your hard hat
I think that you haven't taken our previous conversations seriously
And I feel really frustrated because I am only trying to keep you safe.
Please put it on immediately and then come with me so that we can discuss this further.
The subsequent discussion (**active listening, assertiveness**) will tell you whether or not there is a legitimate reason or whether you need to initiate disciplinary action.
However, structured feedback can be used for good performance too – especially if you want to see more of it.

For Example
You have noticed that Rachel has taken Susan - a new recruit – under her wing and is really helping her to settle in as well as setting a good example with her attitude to work.

"When I came in this morning I noticed that you had invited Susan to have coffee with you and you were checking that she understood yesterday's team briefing.
I think that's really kind of you and I'm pleased that you're making her feel so welcome and helping her to settle in.
I feel pleased that I can rely on you in this way.
So keep it up – if you enjoy this sort of work we can have a chat about ways in which you can get involved in induction for new staff."

How To Set Goals

1. Stated in the positive.
What specifically do you want?

2. Specify present situation.
Where are you now'? (Associated)

3. Specify outcome.
What will you see, hear, feel, etc., when you have it?
As if now.
Make compelling
Insert in future. Be sure future picture is dissociated.

4. Other evidence
How will you know when you have it?

5. For what purpose?
What will this outcome get for you or allow you to do?

6. Is it self-initiated?
Are you in control?

7. What is the desired context?
Where, when, how, and with whom do you want it?

8. What resources are needed?
What do you have now, and what do you need to get your outcome?
Have you ever had or done this before?
Do you know anyone who has?
Can you act as if you have it?

9. Is it ecologically sound?
For what purpose do you want this?
What will you gain or lose if you have it?

What will happen if you get it?
What won't happen if you get it?
What will happen if you don't get it?
What won't happen if you don't get it?

Delegation

Delegation

What is delegation?

Delegation occurs when the leader charges a subordinate with the authority to take decisions within defined areas of responsibility.

Delegation saves you time and develops your people!!

The Benefits of Delegation

Releases large blocks of your time.
Develops subordinates.
Improves motivation.
Creates time for planning and creative work.
Increases job satisfaction.
Inspires confidence and trust.
Quicker action.
Assessment of potential.
Aids succession planning.
Fosters teamwork.
Fresh viewpoint of task.
Platform for better work.
Creates opportunity for achievement.
Improved communication through feedback.
Reduce costs.
Improves all-round effectiveness.

Delegation

The Risks of Delegation

Choose the wrong person.
Where to stop.
Halo effect.
Resentment from other staff.
Cost.
Mistakes.
Individual becomes overworked – stress.
Too many leaders.

The Process of Delegation

Decide what to delegate.
Decide who to delegate to.
Interview to assess willingness.
Addition responsibility needed.
Additional authority needed.
Provide resource.
Additional training and experience needed (dates).
Decide target date for full acceptance.
Set standards.
Review job descriptions.
Monitor progress (stewardship interviews).
Give support and recognition.

Example of a Delegation Plan

Name: *Peter Harding.*
Task Delegated: *Completion of monthly financial report*
Target date for Completion: *5th October.*

Sub - Tasks	Additional authority needed	Plan for additional Training / Experience	Others to be notified	Date	Action
1. Review last 3 financial reports to establish format / style etc.	Password needed to access / use reports. ER to contact IT for password – needs approval from Finance Director	Discuss previous reports with ER – Q&A session.	Finance Director IT	By June 30th	ER PH
2. Collect data from finance staff in all departments.		PH to meet all staff in person.	Finance staff in all departments.	By 2nd of each month	ER PH
3. Enter data into spreadsheet.		One to one training on data categories / structure of spreadsheet.	IT training staff TJ Trained by end of June	On 3rd of each month	PH TJ
4. Run automatic reports		One to one training on reports – software capabilities.	IT training staff TJ Trained by end of June	On 3rd of each month	PH TJ
5. Write conclusions / recommendations and complete cohesive report.	Seek approval for final report from ER prior to submission to board.	Coaching by ER around style / conclusions / political awareness as needed.		By 5th of each month	PH ER
Review dates	June 31st July 5th July 20th August 5th September 5th				

Signed   Elaine Roberts
(Delegating Manager) Date: 15th June

Signed   Date: 15th June   Peter Harding

Is the team member motivated to do the task?
Motivation
Does the team member have the knowledge, skills or experience that is required?
Ability:
Are there any other constraints/priorities?
Constraints:
Is the team member clear about what you expect from them?
Expectations:

Motivation	Are they motivated to do the task/change?
Ability	Do they have the skills knowledge or experience?
Constraints	Are there any other constraints?
Expectations	What are their Expectations?

The Six Step Structure

Step	Action
Step One	**Outline the performance area that needs improvement** Give constructive feedback that focuses on specific areas that need to be improved, eg getting to work on time, late deliverables, internal customer complaint about service. Focus on one key issue at a time.
Step Two	**Explain why the present performance gives you difficulty** This enables the team member to understand the impacts of the problem, eg they may not appreciate that by being late with deliverables they are giving the admin team an extra two hours work per night. Saying why it concerns you makes the request to change the behaviour more reasonable and acceptable. **Ensure responsibility is accepted.**
Step Three	**Find out the cause of the performance issue** Ask open questions such as "What is causing you to be late with your deliverables?" Demonstrate you understand their reasons by paraphrasing and summarising back to them: "So, if I understand you correctly, you mean that…" "So, there is one key issue which concerns you…" "I understand that… Is this right?"
Step Four	**Identify options to improve the situation** Ask them questions to generate some of the ideas to improve the situation. "How do you think the situation could be improved…?" "What do you need to change…?" You can then share your ideas for improving the situation.
Step Five	**How can you help them?** Ask them questions about what you can do to support them.
Step Six	**Agree an action plan to implement the improvement** This action plan should include a clear summary of what needs to be done to improve the performance issue. It may be appropriate to set a date for a follow-up meeting to review progress.

Step One	
Step Two	Explain why the present performance gives you difficulty Ensure responsibility is accepted.
Step Three	Find out the cause of the performance issue
Step Four	Identify options to improve the situation
Step Five	How can you help them?
Step Six	Agree an action plan to implement the improvement