

The Art of Having Difficult Conversations

Webinar

15th September 2021

Overview

- Understanding why they are difficult
- How to positively manage:-
 - Managing ourselves
 - Managing others
 - Managing the conversation.
- Top tips

What is a difficult conversation?

What are they?

What makes it difficult?

Why do we avoid?





“When it matters most we do our worst.”

Managing ourselves

- Remain calm
- Attitude
- Skills
- Preparation
- Reactions and responses
- Acknowledge feelings
- Expectations



To listen



The Chinese characters that make up the verb "to listen" tell us something about this skill.

Right listening

- Focus on person speaking
- Eliminate distractions
- Empathy – listen for feeling
- Content – listen for details
- Question for clarification
- Rephrasing



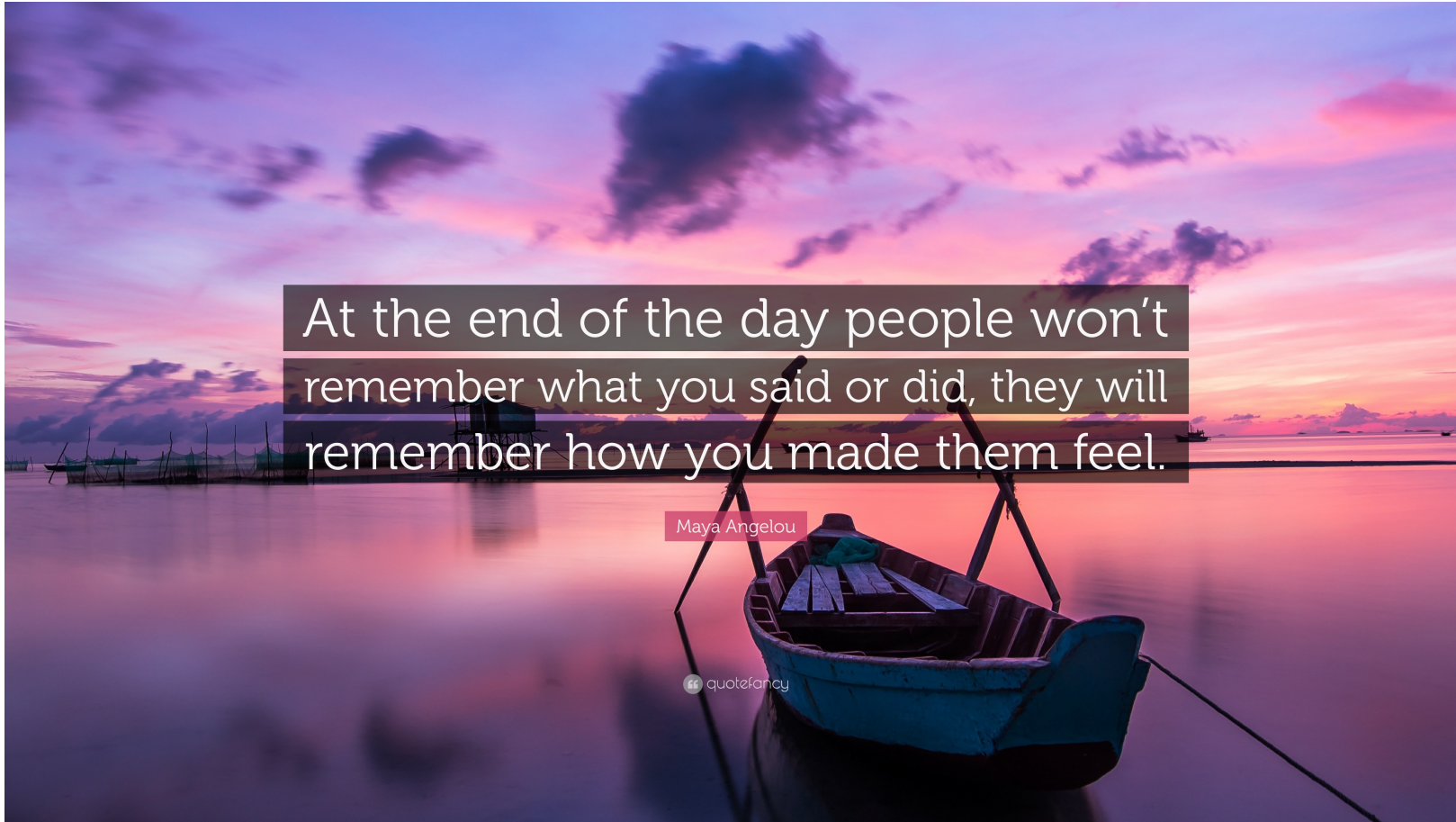
The power of words



Use of language/words matter

- Keeping it neutral
- How negative words impact
- Reframing
- Slow it down





At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou

quotefancy

Hot Buttons

- Recognise them
- Why and what happens
- Name it
- Techniques to manage
- Accept responsibility



A better way?



“BY FAILING
TO PREPARE,
YOU ARE
PREPARING
TO FAIL.”

– Benjamin Franklin

Where to start

- Clarify the purpose
- Make it positive
- Contrasting - I don't want v
I do want
- Invite contribution/listen
and explore
- Solution mode



The conversation structure

The “*what happened?*” conversation
Truth, intentions and blame

The *feelings* conversation
What to do with our emotions

The *identity* conversation
What this conversation says about me

The *learning* conversation
Explore, share, acknowledge, understand, co-create

Delivering bad news/sensitive issues

- Don't delay
- Be clear and direct
- Get to the point
- Take ownership
- Detail the impact
- Leave space/allow time
- Do it face to face
- Most valued factors
 - Attitude
 - Clarity
 - Privacy
 - Answering questions





Mistake #1: We fall into a combat mentality



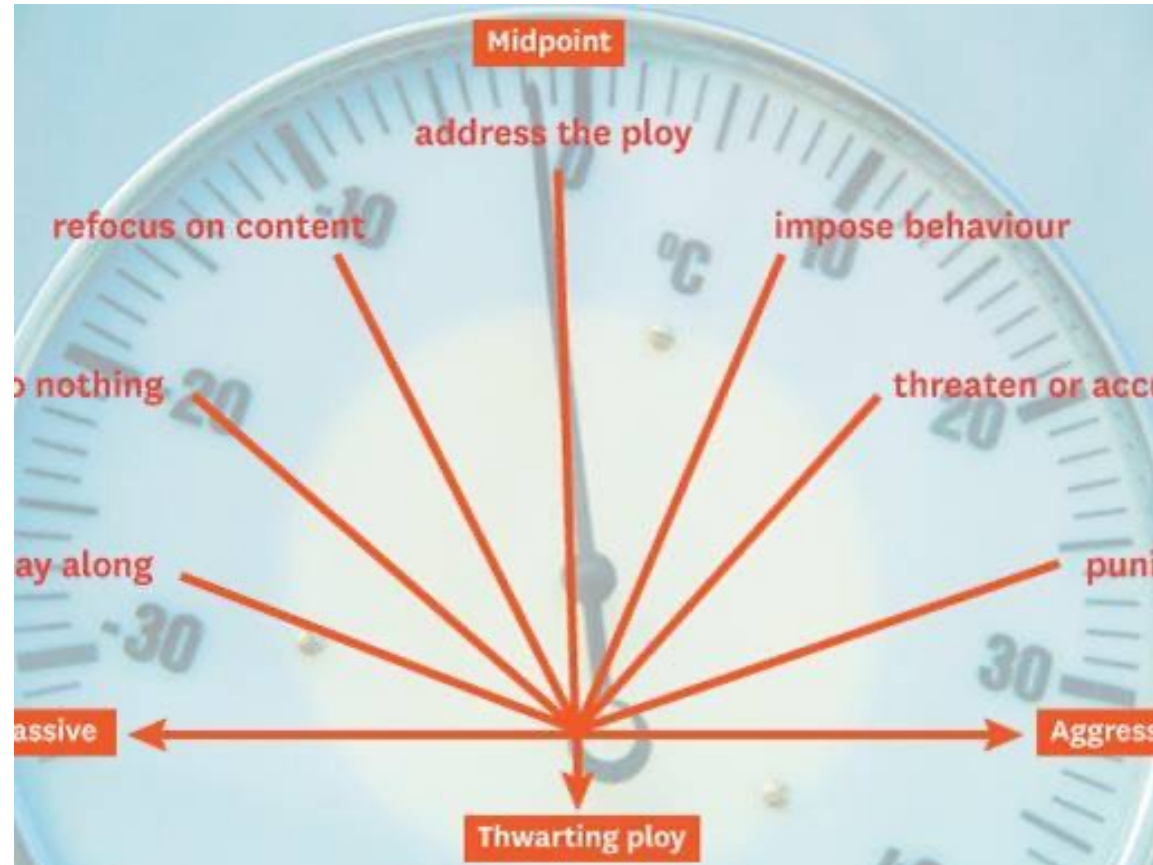
Mistake #2: We try to oversimplify the problem



Mistake #3: We don't bring enough respect to the conversation



Mistake #4: We lash out – or shut down



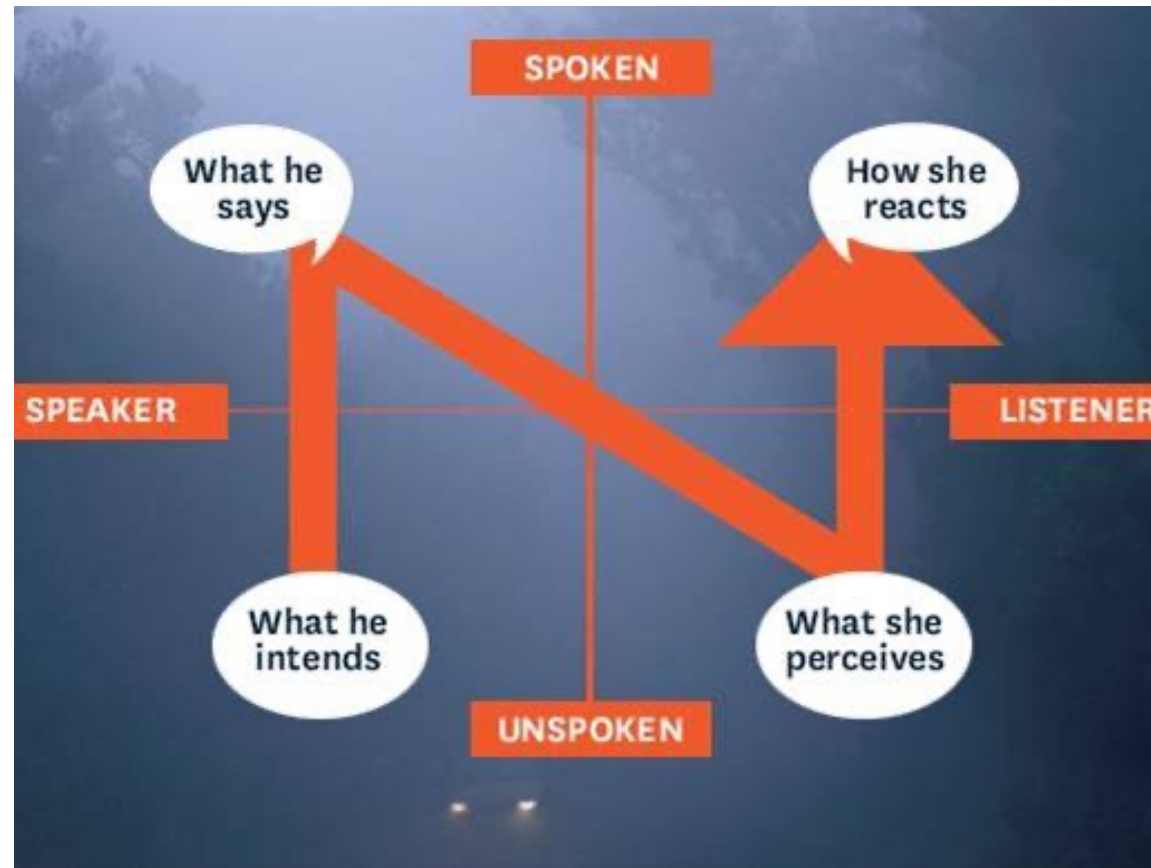
Mistake #5: We react to thwarting ploys



Mistake #6: We get "hooked"



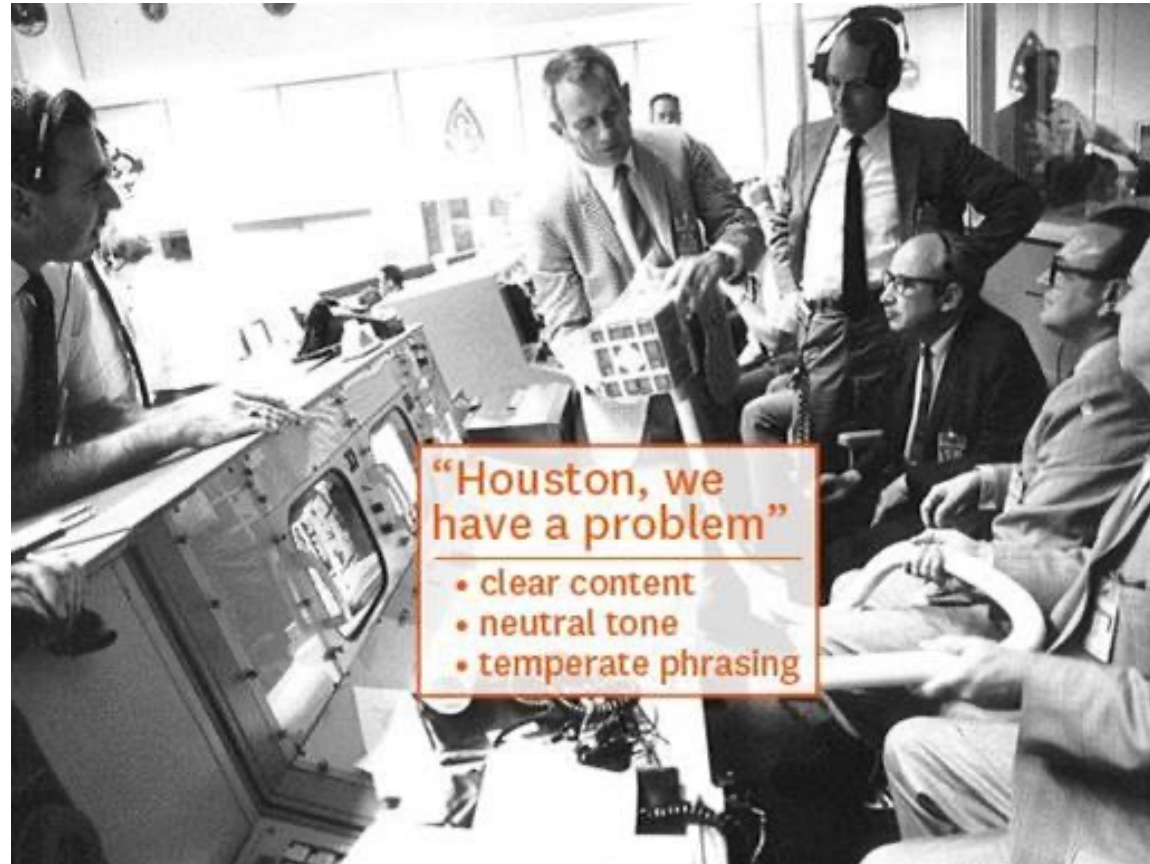
Mistake #7: We rehearse



Mistake #8: We make assumptions about our counterpart's intentions



Mistake #9: We lose sight of the goal



**“Houston, we
have a problem”**

- clear content
- neutral tone
- temperate phrasing



Future events

Webinar

Take the stress out of workplace investigations

[3rd November 2021](#)

Training

Foundation in Workplace Mediation Programme

[16/17/18 & 23/24 November 2021](#)

Useful resources

- **Difficult Conversations** – Stone, Pattern & Heen
- **Conversations Worth Having** – Jackie Stavros & Cheri Torres
- **Crucial Conversations** – Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler
- **The Discomfort Zone** – Marcia Reynolds
- **Mediation Skills for Managers** – Alison Love
- **How to Listen** – Katie Columbus
- **[Difficult Conversations – 9 Common Mistakes- Sarah Carmichael](#)**

Mediation and Conflict Resolution Services and Training

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