Navigating Challenging Conversations

- We have All had them
- Children
- Parents
- Work Colleagues
- Friends

- What is for you a challenging conversation
- Think of one you have had
- What worked for you ?
- What didn't work so well ?
- Discuss in pairs or at the table

The Practical aim

NHS Lothian Values – conversations arising from:

- Inappropriate dress or unprofessional appearance

- Continually unwilling to consider new ideas for improvement

- Continually moaning and demoralising others without making an attempt to make things better

- Criticising or disagreeing with other colleagues in front of patients and relatives

- Failing to treat patients and staff with dignity and respect

- Being disruptive at team meetings

What makes you a difficult person to manage?

Discuss with the person next to you how you may *sometimes* seen as 'difficult'

Four choices

- Cope
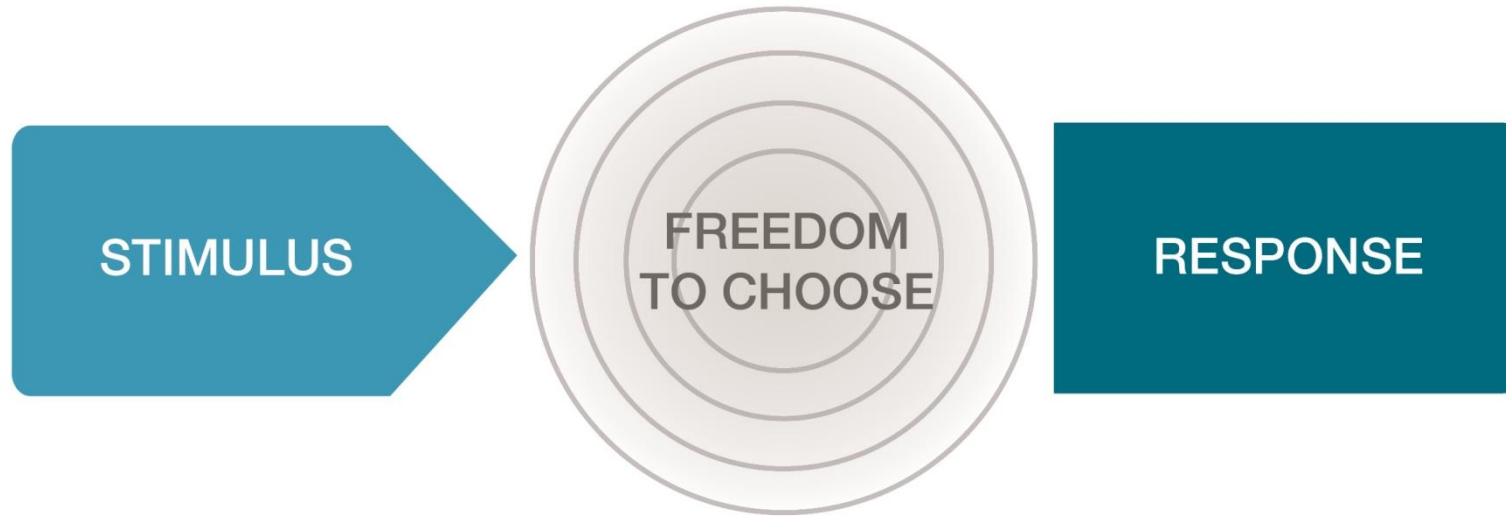- Cut Out
- Complain
- **Converse**

Our Conversational Conditioning

- Be nice, be polite
- Don't talk with your mouth full
- If you have nothing good to say, don't say anything
- Don't interrupt
- Don't talk back to your elders
- Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me

We only reclaim choice

when we open a space between

stimulus and response.

"Hey; You Smell!"

We need to talk

Spend a few minutes discussing how you might start this conversation

What do you want to talk about?

How would you begin?

A potential way to address the issue :

I need to talk to you because there is something happening with you just now that is worrying me.

I've noticed that your body odour has become strong and unpleasant.

I'm finding it very difficult raising this with you and I'm sorry for not saying anything earlier; the fact is, I have been avoiding it.

This is a personal issue, and although it may be difficult, I do think it is important for us to talk about because I want to understand what is going on, and I don't want other people in the team to start making comments about this behind your back.

Can we talk about this?

A (slightly amended) potential way to address the issue :

I need to talk to you because I'm concerned about you. I'm finding it difficult raising this with you, but I do think it's important for us to talk.

I've noticed that your body odour has become strong and unpleasant.

I'm sorry for not saying anything earlier; the fact is, I have been avoiding it.

This is a personal issue, and I want to understand what is going on, I also don't want other people in the team to start making comments about this behind your back.

Can we talk about this?

Secret Santa

"I'll just leave a bar of soap or some deodorant on their desk.

I'm sure the penny will drop!....."

Fob off to Employee Relations / Human Resources

Delivery at a Distance

"I've sent a text – sorted!...."

The last minute Friday 'Hit and Run'

"See you next week then,

Oh and by the way,

You really stink !"

The Sandwich Approach

"Hi there, nice job on the leadership report.

By the way you smell awful these days.

Oh, and meant to say - I really like the new haircut."

Learning from this

You have to 'show up' to have a conversation

Showing up = speaking personally, talk from 'I'

Avoid trying to 'fix'; help them consider outcomes for themselves

Look for mutual purposes

Own your part/your contribution

You can't control other people's reactions
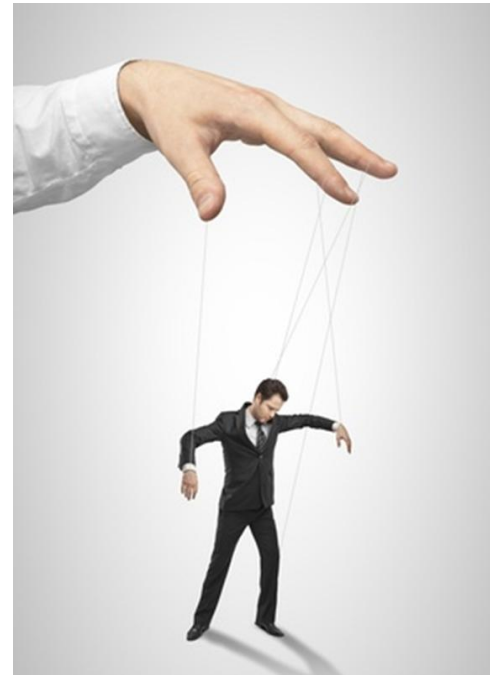
Apologise when appropriate

Nice is never enough

Every time we ignore or fail to challenge an unwanted behaviour, we are delivering a message saying that 'it's ok'

Telling replaces talking, power replaces relationships

Believing the myth of control and power is how we make people 'Just do it'

Conversational Keys

- **Show up - "I want to talk because I…."**
- Frame benevolently
- Share what you know and don't know
- Steer clear of the Drama Triangle
- Own your contribution
- Choose optimism
- Invite conversation

All this should take no more than 60 seconds

The 3 Essential Ingredients

Honesty

What's true for me?

What do I actually think and feel?

Benevolence

What our mutual interests?

Why is this an important conversation not just for me, but also for them?

Courage

To show up as a person first, own my contribution, hold onto optimism, and extend an invitation

What you need to consider :

- Name the issue

- Describe your emotions around the issue

- Select specific examples that illustrates behaviour

- Clarify what's at stake for all concerned

- Identify your contribution to problem

- Indicate your wish/belief to resolve

- Invite them to respond

"Are you willing to talk with me about this?"

(or)

"As a starting point, I'd really like to hear your take on this…."

(or)

"How do you see things?"

(or)

"What's your understanding of where we are/how we got here?"

Scenario

A member of your team is a highly experienced practitioner who has worked in the NHS for a number of years. You know them well as you have worked together most of your career.

Recently, you have started to receive some informal complaints and concerns about their attitude towards their multi-professional team members.

While the concerns are not about actual practice or misconduct, there is a theme of rudeness, aggression and a lack of respect, especially to general management colleagues.

"I want to talk because I value our relationship and I don't want it undermined by second-hand gossip.

Recently I've heard people describe you as rude and disrespectful. – and this isn't the person I know.

As awkward as I feel in raising this, we have a long history as colleagues and that's something I believe we both value.

I feel somewhat guilty that I didn't say to those who were complaining that they should be talking to you, rather than grumbling to me.

While avoiding this conversation would be the easy option, I also believe it would be a betrayal of our relationship.

Can we talk about what's going on?"

Scenario

I've been in this department for almost 4 years now, and in that time, I've only had one formal appraisal meeting with my Supervisor. So while I think I'm doing what needs to be done, I'm never really sure how my performance is viewed or rated.

I feel nervous that at some point I will be told that I'm not performing as well as I should be – and that this will have consequences for my career.

I was reluctant to bring this up with my Supervisor. When I finally did mention my concern as we were passing each other in the corridor, she said that I shouldn't worry about it and just carry on doing what I was doing.

"I want to talk because I'm feeling a bit lost and confused.

I try to do my best, but I don't have anything to measure my work by.

I think I would feel more confident and take more initiative if I knew that I was on the right track – and I wouldn't have to ask you for direction all the time.

I know I should have brought this up when I first started to feel this way – and trying to have the conversation when we met in the corridor wasn't really a good idea.

Can we please sit down and talk about this properly?"

The 3 Essential Ingredients

Honesty

What's true for me?

What do I actually think and feel?

Benevolence

What our mutual interests?

Why is this an important conversation not just for me, but also for them?

Courage

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Questions ?

HR Online Courage to Manage

Dealing with Special Problems in Groups

- Silence in the group
- Talk as an avoidance
- Chronic monopolist
- Acting out, hostile behavior
- Resistance
- Absences
- Manipulator
- Do-gooders
- Hidden agendas

Interventions - what should I do to get things back on track ?

Ask yourself:
- What is my purpose in intervening?
- When is the appropriate time to intervene?
- Where should I intervene?
- How should I intervene?

- Pause before reacting
- Do not push back
- Ask "what" or "how" questions instead of "why"
- Describe behaviors - **say what you see**
- Do a perception check with group

Facilitation challenges

Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors

Confront before whole group

Confront on a break (privately one-on-one)

Talk directly to person (privately one-on-one)

Ask, " What do you think?" (say their name first)

Walk by them and make eye contact

Walk half way

Stand up

Make eye contact

Ignore or avoid

High

Low

Level of Intervention

Options for Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors