



MASTERING
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

From Conflict to Connection

How to Navigate Difficult
Conversations in a Respectful
and Effective Way

SCORE Los Angeles



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My Life's Passion:

Helping individuals understand and work well across differences



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Agenda

- Discover Your Conflict Resolution Approach
- What to Consider When Facilitating a Difficult Conversation
- Types of Questions to Ask to Help Individuals Process the Situation
- Tips for Effective Listening
- Conducting Challenging Conversations
- Steps to Facilitate Difficult Discussions
- Illustrative Examples
- Conclusion | Key Takeaways | Q&A



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Eliminate Distractions



LET'S
DO
THIS



How I Approach Conflict

Introductory Activity

In a Conflict Situation I Tend to:

1. Remove myself from the situation.
2. Give in to maintain the relationship.
3. Find a workable solution, even though it may not be the best solution.
4. Keep defending my position until the goal is achieved.
5. Keep working until both of us get what we want.

1. Remove myself from the situation

Avoider

- You would rather not address the conflict at all.
- More comfortable ignoring or delaying issues; even repressing your own feelings and needs.
- Considered a **lose-lose style** because the conflict goes unaddressed, and teamwork and productivity are negatively affected.

Avoidance Example

- Two team members missed a deadline but disagree on the reasons why.
- Instead of trying to understand the reasons why (Lack of data? No clear expectations?) they **avoid the conversation entirely**, focusing on their next tasks.
- They believe it's easier to "**let it go**" than to confront the situation.

The long-term Impact:

- Because the conflict is ignored, resentment builds between parties.
- They begin avoiding collaboration, which slows down productivity and harms team cohesion.
- **Over time, the unaddressed issue leads to misunderstandings in future projects—reflecting the lose-lose nature of avoidance, where both parties and the team suffer.**

2. Give in to maintain the relationship

Accommodator

- More comfortable giving in to the other person's needs, sacrificing your own goals.
- Considered a ***lose-win style***.
- Appears cooperative but can be detrimental in the long run because it does not produce a win for all parties.

Accommodation Example



- During a team meeting, Sarah and Tom propose conflicting ideas for the new project timeline.
- Sarah believes the project should have an extended 6-month plan to ensure quality.
- Tom pushes for a tighter four-month deadline to meet the CEO's expectations.

Resolution:

- In the end, Sarah decides to **step back and agree to Tom's four-month deadline**, despite her concerns.
- That is because she values team harmony and for her, team cohesion is more important.
- -While this is a "**lose-win**" **outcome** for Sarah, it maintains positive team dynamics and fosters goodwill—**something Sarah values more than winning the argument.**

3. Find a workable solution, even though it may not be the best solution

Compromiser

- The goal is to find a quick solution.
- You know you can't get all, but at least, you win some.
- Considered a ***semi-win/semi-lose style***.
- Go-to approach for situations “*when all else fails.*”

Compromising Example



- Two department managers—one from Marketing and one from Sales—are in disagreement over the budget allocation for an upcoming product launch.
- Marketing wants more funds for digital campaigns, while Sales argues they need additional budget for training the salesforce to handle customer inquiries.

Resolution:

- Instead of endlessly debating, the two managers agree to **split the extra budget 50/5.**
- This allows Marketing to proceed with scaled-down campaigns while Sales receives partial funding for their training.
- While neither gets everything they wanted, **both teams gain something, ensuring the project moves forward without delay.**

4. Keep defending my position until the goal is achieved

Competitor

- Tries to win the argument at all costs – usually at the expense of the other person.
- Considered a ***win-lose style*** – one person gets what they want while the other loses.
- Tends to produce short-term victories.
- In the end, it damages productivity because it hurts people’s relationships.

Competition Example



- During a team meeting, two colleagues, Jamie and Alex, argue over which marketing strategy to implement for an upcoming product launch.
- Jamie strongly believes in running a social media campaign, while Alex insists on using email marketing to engage existing customers.

Resolution:

- Because Jamie is a **competitor**, he dominates the conversation, dismissing Alex's points without fully listening and insists that the team proceeds with the social media campaign.
- By **winning the argument at all costs**, Jamie gets their preferred strategy approved. But Alex now feels unheard and frustrated.

Long-term Impact:

- While the social media campaign may generate results, Alex's motivation and trust in Jamie are damaged.
- Over time, this **win-lose approach** creates resentment, reduces team collaboration, and hurts productivity and relationships.

5. Keep working until both of us get what we want.

Cooperator

- You try to find a solution that meets everyone's needs.
- This is a ***win-win style***.
- The issues are fully explored, everyone states their needs, and people work together to find creative solutions in which **everyone benefits**.

Cooperation Example

- A project deadline is approaching, and two departments—Design and Development—disagree on how to allocate resources.
- The Design team needs more time to finalize visuals; the Development team insists on moving forward with coding to meet the timeline.

Resolution:

- So, the team leader, a **cooperator**, organizes a meeting where both departments openly share their concerns and needs.
- After **exploring the issues thoroughly**, they agree on a solution: Design will finalize the most critical visuals first, allowing Development to begin coding incrementally.

Outcome:

- In the end, both teams feel heard, and the solution addresses their key needs.
- This **win-win style** ensures productivity remains on track while fostering stronger collaboration and trust between departments.

Please Note

Depending on the situation, individuals can adopt different conflict resolution styles even if they have a preferred approach.

Context is Key

- A **compromising style** might be better when a **QUICK RESOLUTION** is necessary.
- In situations where one party has more authority, adopting an **accommodating** style might foster goodwill or de-escalate tension.
- If preserving the relationship is the primary goal, you might prioritize an **accommodating or avoiding style** over competition.



When Facilitating a Difficult Conversation

What You Need to Consider

In a Conflict Situation, You need



1. Self-awareness
2. Good observational skills
3. To distinguish between *intent* and *impact*

In a Conflict Situation, You need (cont'd)



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4. Listen and respond effectively and compassionately
5. Learn what individuals have gone through to get to their current situation
6. You need emotional intelligence to stay in the situation even if you are scared, angry, or hurt.

Recap

1. We all have a preferred way to handle conflict.
2. There are at least 6 things you need to keep in mind when handling a conflict:
 - Self-awareness
 - Good observational skills
 - Distinguish between *intent* and *impact*
 - Respond with compassion
 - Learn what they have gone through
 - Stay in the situation

Helping Individuals Process the Situation

1. Ask about what YOU observed.
2. Help them reflect on the situation.
3. Ask them what needs to happen for the situation to be resolved.



Observational Questions

- *What I heard you say was....*

Questions about
what you observed or
heard

- *What I just heard is that.....*

Reflective Questions

Questions that help individuals process the situation

- *What hurt you about what happened?*
- *How did it affect you when it happened?*
- *How did it feel?*
- *How does it affect you now? In the workplace? In your relationship?*

Reflective Questions (cont'd)

Questions to help individuals reflect/share their situation

- *What do you leave at the door when you come in every morning?*
- *What does the organization lose when you can't be yourself?*

CTA Questions



Questions about what needs to happen for the situation to be resolved

- If you could say something to **Mary**, what would you say?
- If you could tell **Mary** what you need to be able to **move forward with this project**, what would you say?

CTA Questions (cont'd)

Questions about what needs to happen for the situation to be resolved

What makes it **unsafe** for you here.

What would make you **feel safer** her?



Listen with your ears

To hear the words, the tone, and the pitch



Listen with your mind

To understand
To analyze, and
To broaden your perspective



Listen with your eyes

To see the facial expression
To read the body language, and
To look at the “window of the soul”



Listen with your heart

To feel the emotions
To empathize
To respond accurately



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How to Be an Effective Listener

Listen with Ting

Listening with Ting

- Helps you focus on the speaker and understand **THEIR MESSAGE**.
- Enables you to hold a much higher quality of conversation and communication.
- Helps you become more fully engaged with the individual and what they are telling you.



How to Conduct a Difficult Conversation or How to React When You Are Called a.....

1)





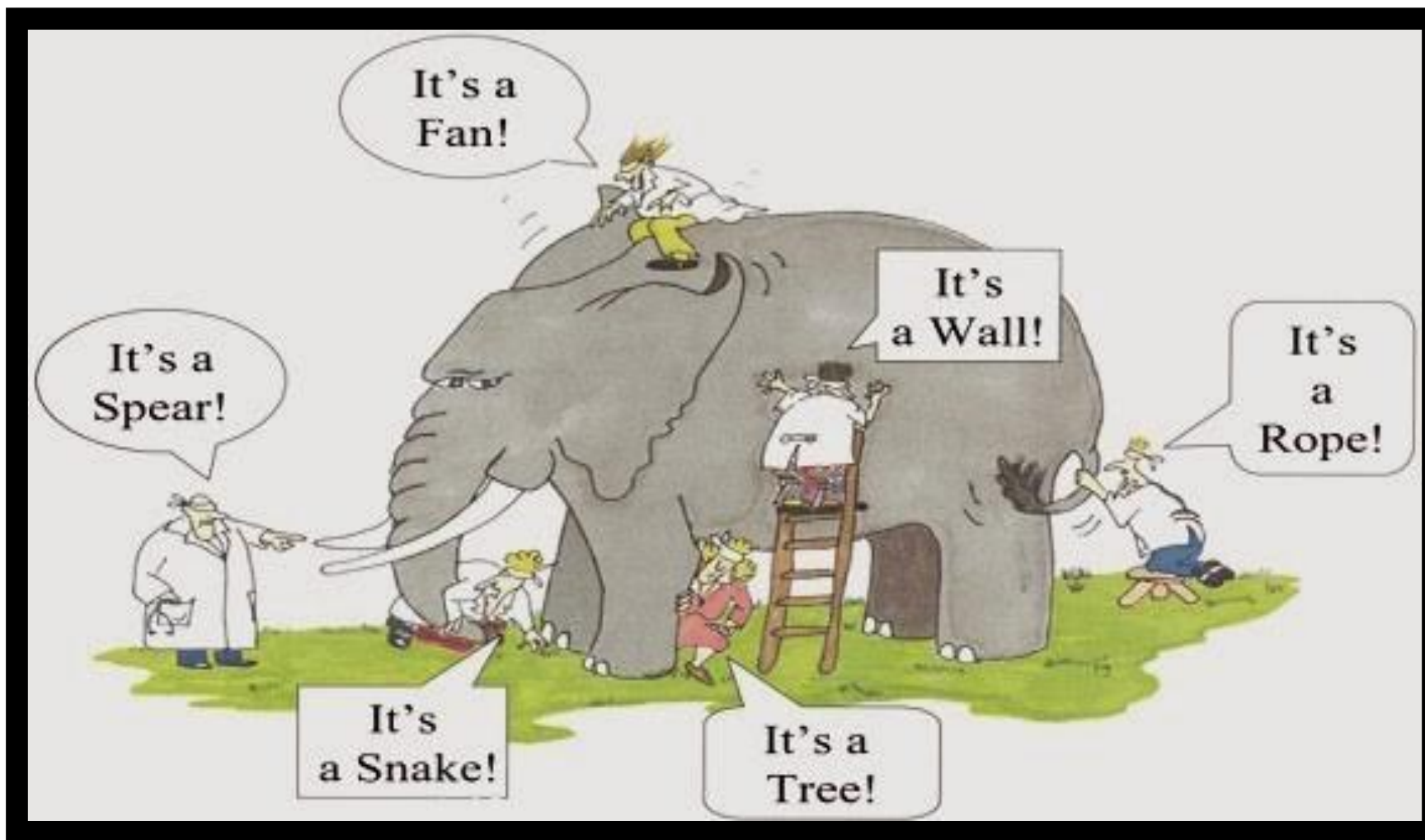
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2)
Remind Yourself:
This is Not About Me





3) Last-Drop-In-The-Bucket Syndrome



4) Think of the “*Blind Men and the Elephant*” Parable



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5)
Get out of **debate**
mode and get ready
to **dialogue**



6) Follow the Principles of Facilitating Difficult Conversations





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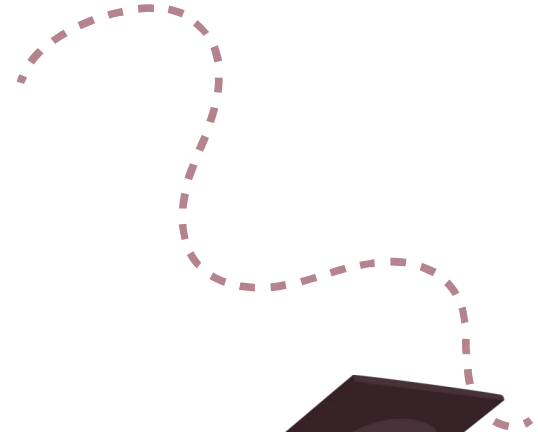
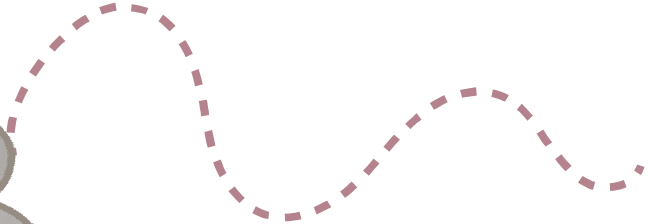
7) Take Steps to Address the Inequities That Still Exist – In Your Organization and Beyond



Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



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Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



Client, Colleague, Customer, etc.



Angry
Hurt
Upset

Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



Center Yourself

- Take a deep breath
- Not about me
- You don't know the whole story
- Get ready to engage in a dialogue and not a debate
- Listen with TING

Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



**Spend Time Understanding
the Situation – from their perspective**



3 Types of Questions
Observational
Reflective
CTA

Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



3 Rs

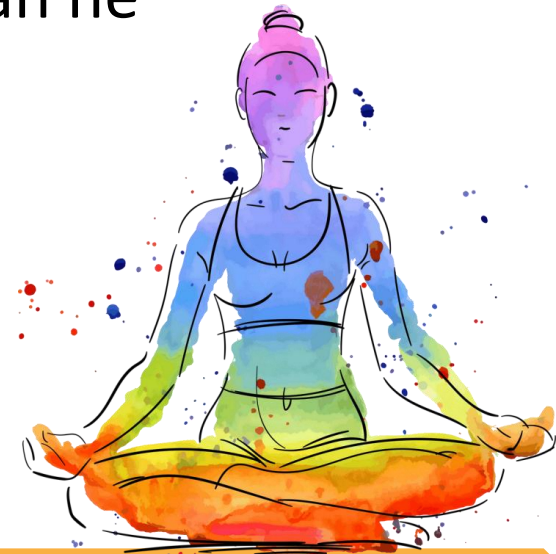
- **Resolution**
- **Referral**
- **Resources**

Example

Upset Client

YOU ARE A RACIST!!!!

(after learning he won't receive the loan he expects).



Example



I can see you are _____ (upset, angry, hurt...)

First of all, I am sorry for that. My intent was not to _____ (upset, anger, hurt) you.

*I would like to **learn more** about your situation to see if I am able to come up with a viable solution for you.*

*For that to happen I need to **gather some additional information** from you.*

*Can you **provide me with additional details** about your situation?*

Example



This is the fourth financial institution I have contacted this week to apply for a loan and I keep getting denied.

My wife is seven months pregnant, and my little boy is turning three next week.

I really don't want to celebrate his birthday as a homeless family.

My wife has just been diagnosed with gestational diabetes.

This stress is too much for her.....



Example

What I heard you say is that _____.

Did I leave anything out?

Or Is this accurate?



This is correct!

Or

Not quite.....

Keep asking questions. This is an opportunity for you to gain a deeper understanding of what the individual has had to face.
Everyone has a story.

Example



CTA Questions:

What would you like to see happen?

What do you need?

Example



I am in need of some sort of financial assistance so I can make my mortgage payments.

Example

Now That You Fully Understand the Situation

Resolution Referral Resources

If a loan is a possibility, great!

If a loan is NOT a possibility:

- Is there a different type of financial assistance he would qualify for?
- Are there any community resources, programs, or partnerships you could refer him to?
- Is there anything else you can think of to provide some hope and restore his dignity?

Always aim for providing hope and restoring dignity.



Example 2

Conversation Between a Frustrated Employee and a Team Leader

Scenario: A mid-level employee feels excluded from a major project they were passionate about and confronts their team leader during a one-on-one meeting.

Frustrated Employee:

I don't understand why I wasn't included in the GreenTech project!

I've been working here for years, and I feel like my contributions don't even matter anymore.

Is it because I'm not one of the "favorites" around here?

Team Leader:

I can see this situation is really upsetting for you.

Thank you for sharing how you feel—it's important to me that we have an honest and open conversation about this.

I'm sorry if my actions have made you feel undervalued; that was never my intent.

Can you help me understand more about your perspective?

What about the GreenTech project makes it feel especially significant for you?

Frustrated Employee:

This project aligns perfectly with my skills in sustainable engineering!

I've been trying to show my dedication by volunteering for similar initiatives, but I keep getting overlooked. It feels like no matter how hard I work I'm not seen as a key contributor to this team.

Team Leader:

I hear you. It sounds like you're passionate about sustainability and have been putting in significant effort to make an impact in that area. It's clear this project means a lot to you.

Is there anything else about your experiences or our team dynamics that you think I should know? I want to make sure I fully understand where you're coming from.

Frustrated Employee:

I guess I also feel like communication is lacking. Decisions are made without asking for input, and it feels like only certain people's voices matter.

Team Leader:

Thank you for bringing that up. Your perspective is incredibly valuable, and I want to ensure everyone on the team feels heard and has opportunities to contribute meaningfully.

Let's discuss how we can address this moving forward. What would you like to see change, either with communication or how project assignments are handled?

Frustrated Employee:

I'd like to have more input on project decisions, and I want a chance to be involved in future initiatives related to sustainability.

Team Leader:

That sounds fair and doable. Here's what I propose:

1. I'll review the process for assigning projects and ensure it's more transparent.
2. Let's schedule a follow-up in two weeks to revisit this conversation and check progress.
3. I'd also like to invite you to a brainstorming session next month for an upcoming sustainability project—your expertise could be invaluable.

Would this help address some of the concerns you've raised?

Frustrated Employee:

Yes, that would make me feel more involved and appreciated. Thank you for taking this seriously.

Team Leader:

I'm glad we had this conversation, and I appreciate your honesty. My goal is for every team member to feel valued and have opportunities to shine. Let's keep this dialogue going so we can create an even stronger, more inclusive team dynamic.

Connect with Me



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A vertical business card for Luiza Dreasher. The top half has a blue background with a white wavy border. The bottom half is white with a blue border. It contains contact information for Luiza Dreasher, President and CEO of Mastering Cultural Differences. The contact details include a website, email, LinkedIn profile, YouTube channel, a 30-minute meeting link, and a newsletter link. Each detail is preceded by a small blue icon representing the respective platform or service.

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-  www.masteringculturaldifferences.com/dei-plus-newsletter

