



COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY DURING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

FEAP in Collaboration
with Hoo's Well

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Goal

- Develop awareness and learn skills to more effectively communicate, especially when doing so isn't easy . . . to help us improve both Results and Relationships

Skills Needed for Effective Communication

1. Self-Awareness & Emotion Regulation
2. Tune in to other people's emotions
3. Understand how our perceptions affect our behavior and impact the outcome of conversations

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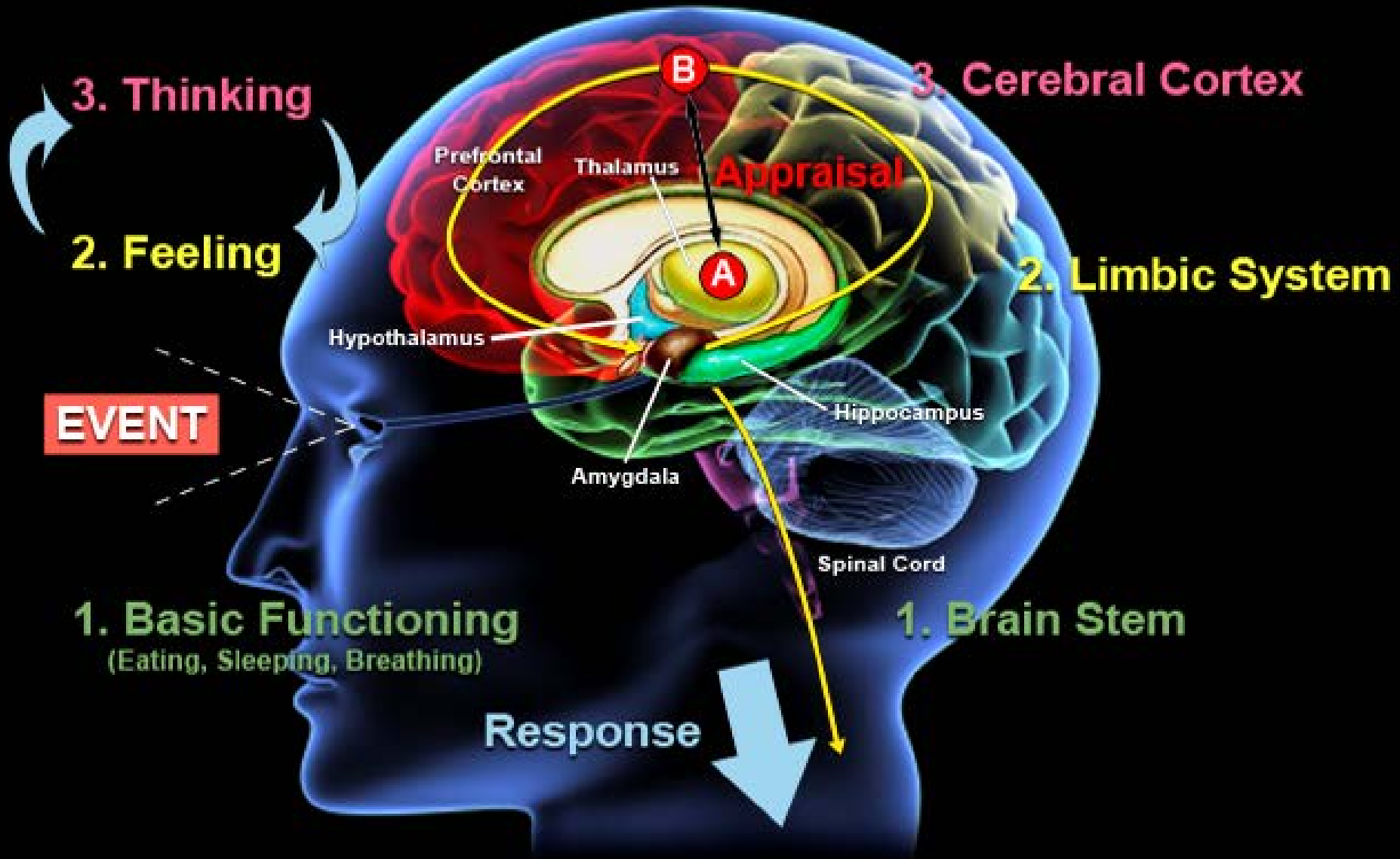
**“I’ll be at the dentist this afternoon.
I’m having a problem with my biting sarcasm.”**

1. Self-Awareness



Lack of self-awareness leads to emotional reactivity rather than thoughtful responses

Emotional Brain



Emotion Regulation



- With practice, we can develop the ability to recognize and regulate emotions
- When we do this, we can move from reacting to responding
- This increases our choices in any situation

STOP

Stop: *pause for a moment*

Take a Breath: *to calm and center yourself*

Observe: *what am I feeling?*
What are my goals?
What are my choices?

Proceed with awareness



Both Before & During a Conversation

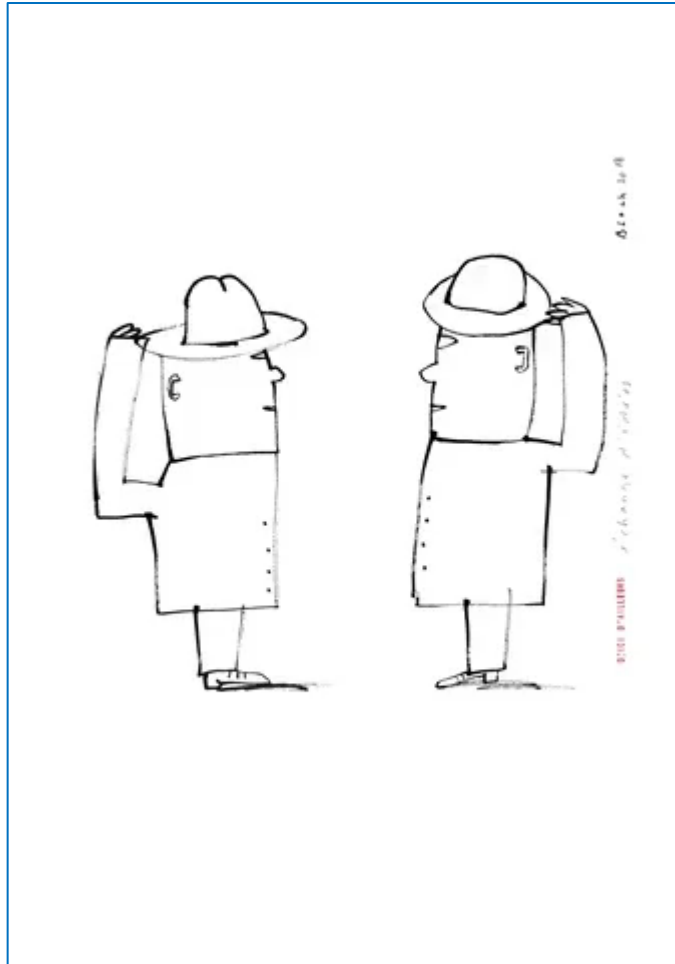
Ask yourself:

“What do I really want?”

- For myself
- For the relationship
- For other(s)
- What do I not want?



2. Tuning in to Others



Tuning in to Others

PUBLIC WORDS FOUND THAT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS BROKEN UP IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:



55% BODY LANGUAGE



38% TONE OF VOICE



7% WORDS

3. Perception Affects Behavior

**Everything
is open to
interpretation.**



*Stories
are how we make
sense of the world*



We Can See Things Differently



If I don't recognize that that is just a Perception, I can miss what else might be there.



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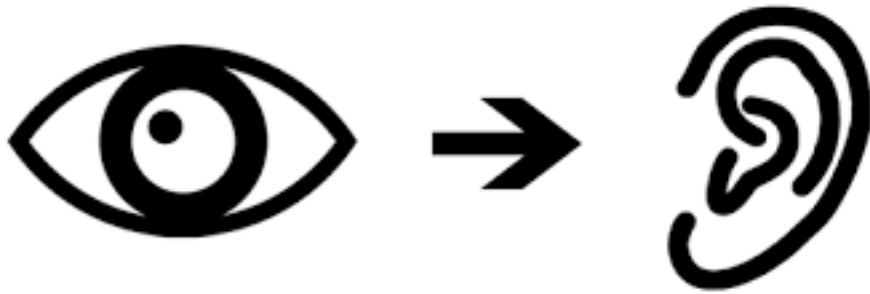
Skills for Mastering Our Stories



Skill #1

SEPARATE FACTS FROM STORIES

FACTS



Stories



Stories Comprised of:

Judgments – determine whether facts are good or bad

Conclusions – help us fit elements together

Attributions – tell us why people do what they do

Activity: The Story

The supervisor yelled at the new recruit.

The young man waited until the supervisor was gone and poured sand into the machine, smiling at his sister who worked there.

Later that month, the boss discovered the problem and fired him. The woman felt bad and quit in protest.

TRUE, FALSE or UNKNOWN?



Separate Facts from Stories

The supervisor yelled at the new recruit.

The young man waited until the supervisor was gone and poured sand into the machine, smiling at his sister who worked there.

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- **Judgments:** determine whether facts are good or bad
- **Conclusions:** help us fit elements together
- **Attributions:** tell us why people do what they do



Skill #2

WATCH FOR 3 SPECIFIC STORIES

Three Specific Stories



**It's Not My
Fault**



**It's All Your
Fault**



**There's Nothing
I Can Do**



*The Rest
of The
Story*

Skill #3

TELL THE REST OF THE STORY

Curiosity is the Antidote

**What is
the
Story I
am
telling
myself?**

JUSTIFICATION	ANTIDOTE
"It's not my fault." VICTIM	"What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?"
"It's all your fault." VILLIAN	"Why would a reasonable, rationale and decent person so that?" <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assume Positive Intent- Use Inquiry vs. Judgment
"There's Nothing I Can Do" HELPLESS	"What results do I want?" "What is my goal?" "What is within my control?"

Assume Positive Intent

Goal: to limit or avoid negative biases

Technique: When someone does something you don't understand, or seems negative or unreasonable, take the stance of assuming they had a good reason, a good intention. Then ask the question "I wonder why....?" "Tell me..."

Suggestions for use: Use DAILY when people say or do things you don't understand or seem negative



Inquiry vs. Judgment

Goal: to avoid jumping to a conclusion when there might be other possible explanations for what has occurred

Technique: when you are aware that you are making assumptions about an event or a person, stop and ask yourself if there are other possibilities. Could there be circumstances at play of which you are unaware?

Suggestions for use: Key is recognizing when you are making judgments without full evidence





Our Style Under Stress

What are some of the ways
that we Self-Protect?

Moving Away

Avoiding

Masking

Withdrawing

Avoiding—staying away from difficult or uncomfortable topics or issues

Masking—understating, sugar coating, sarcasm, being indirect/talking around the real issue

Withdrawing—Pulling out of communication completely; emotionally, physically, psychologically

DIALOGUE

Controlling

Labeling

Attacking

Controlling—coercing others through how we share our views—interrupting, speaking in absolutes, overstating

Labeling—trying to win or have others give in through ridiculing their ideas or name-calling

Attacking—making sure others hurt; emotionally, physically or psychologically

Moving Against



People will forget what you said

People will forget what you did

But people will never forget how
you made them feel

- *Maya Angelou*

Candor is Never the Problem . . .

- People don't become defensive about what you are saying . . .

People become defensive about:

- How you are saying it
- Why they think you are saying it

A man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt, is speaking and gesturing with his right hand. The background is a warm, reddish-brown color with geometric shapes. Large, bold, white text is overlaid on the image.

WHAT TO DO IN THE FIRST 30 SECONDS OF A TOUGH CONVERSATION

VitalSmarts

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/DEESZjyRyWg>

Contrasting

Tell What You Don't Mean

“I don't want you to think I'm not satisfied with the quality of your work. I think you do a very good job . . .

Then Say What You Do Mean

. . . The punctuality issue is important and I would like for you to work on that”.

My concern is not . . .

My concern is . . .

I don't want you to think . . .

*However, I do think ___ is
important to discuss.*

My intent is not to . . .

My intent is to . . .

I'm not . . .

I am . . .



**This is not
about . . .**

**It is . . . I would
like to discuss.**

Forgive me, I am not implying . . .

What I want to talk about is . . .

My purpose today is not to . . .

My real purpose is to . . .

We Have to Share Our Stories

- Mindfully share your stories
 - ▣ Talk Tentatively
 - ▣ Be Mindful of Tone and Body Language
- Ask the other person for their Perspective



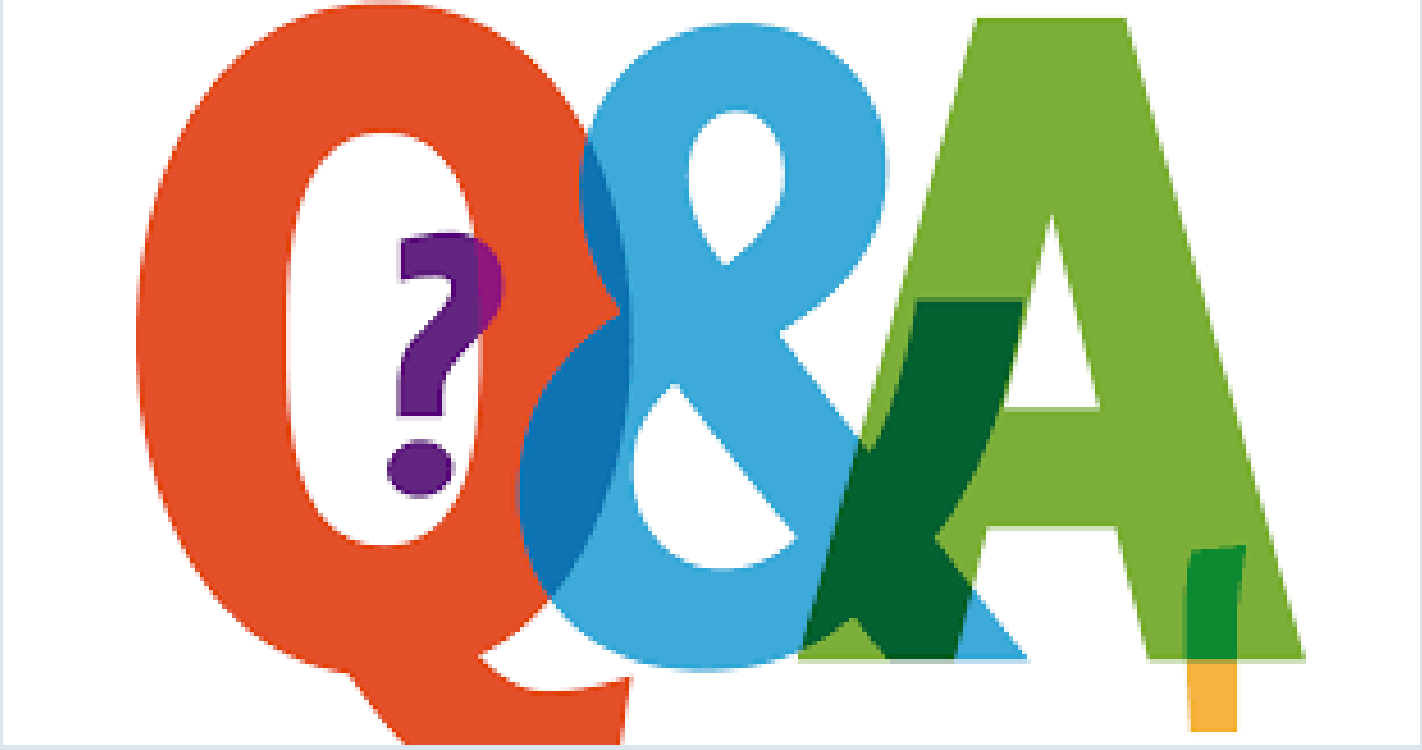
Link to video: <https://youtu.be/YnvaTnzV-0>



Link to video: <https://youtu.be/8Ug7VZTiB1A>

Putting It All Together

- Plan for Difficult Conversations
- Monitor (Self and Other Awareness & Emotional Regulation) as you go
- Be Intentional about Mastering Your Stories
- Make it Safe & Keep it Safe
 - ▣ Mutual Purpose and Respect
 - ▣ Apologize if appropriate
 - ▣ Use Contrasting
- Mindfully Share your Story
- Ask the other person for their Perception



Faculty and Employee Assistance Program (FEAP)

- Uvafeap.com
- 434-243-2643
- mag5j@virginia.edu

A. Gallo. "How to Control Your Emotions During a Difficult Conversation." *Harvard Business Review*, 12/01/2017: <https://hbr.org/2017/12/how-to-control-your-emotions-during-a-difficulty-conversation>