

HANDOUT

Straight A's for Facilitating Crucial Conversations

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AFFIRM — Affirm and appreciate people's willingness to have a conversation.

- I'm glad you brought that up.
- I'm glad we have the opportunity to talk about this.

ACKNOWLEDGE — Acknowledge what people are saying. Make sure you understand what they're expressing and that they feel heard. Paraphrase their words and feelings.

- I'm hearing you say that . . . Is that correct?
- It sounds like you feel . . .
- So from your perspective . . .

ASK — Ask questions to better understand their behavior, feelings, and perspectives and to help them reflect on their views. Be open and curious. Watch your tone. Continue to explore until they feel heard.

- Can you tell me more about what you mean by that?
- What experiences have led you to that belief?
- How were you feeling when . . . ?

ADD — Relate and then offer additional information.

First, try to connect with what they are saying.

- I can understand how you might feel/think this way.
- I've had a similar experience.
- I've had thoughts/questions like that also.
- I'm also concerned about . . .

Then, add other experiences, information, historical/social/political context, alternative explanations, and/or the impact on you. Challenge misinformation and broaden people's perspectives.

- I've had experiences that are quite different than what you've described.
- I've read some research that suggests that . . .
- I've learned that . . .
- Another way to look at it is . . .
- When I hear you say that, I feel . . .

ASSESS and ADDRESS — Assess their response and notice their body language. Reflect on your own internal and external responses—How are you feeling? What's happening in your body? Decide on the best response.

To the other person:

- I'm wondering what you're thinking/feeling right now?
- You look . . . (doubtful, confused, etc.)
- I'm wondering how what I've shared has landed for you?

To yourself:

- I'm starting to get more tense and more aggressive. What's activating me?
- This person is reminding me of the stereotype. I need to refocus on their full humanity.
- I need to take a few deep breaths before responding.
- I think I need to end this conversation for now.

APPRECIATE — Appreciate their willingness to talk with you, share their thoughts/feelings, and listen to your perspective. Identify any follow-up.

- Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.
- I appreciate your willingness to hear my perspective.
- I appreciated you sharing your experiences/thoughts with me.
- I'm glad to talk again or share that resource with you.