


Slide 1

**WE NEED TO TALK:**  
Overcoming the fear of having a difficult conversation

Jean Marie Heilig  
Fiscal Officer  
Colorado State Library  
heilig\_j@cde.state.co.us



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 2

**OUTCOMES**

- o Understand what constitutes a difficult conversation and when it's needed.
- o Recognize the value of and barriers to engaging in difficult conversations.
- o Understand the importance of follow up in order to effect change and hold employees accountable.
- o Implement a personal plan for strengthening your ability to navigate current and future conversations

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 3

“A difficult conversation is anything you find it hard to talk about”  
-Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999, p.xxvii

“A difficult conversation is one that required courage on the part of one or both parties”  
-Sanderson, 2005, p.4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

Slide 4

EXAMPLES:



The slide features a collage of five images. Top left: a woman with her hand to her mouth, appearing to be crying or surprised. Top middle: a man and a woman in a meeting, with the woman looking thoughtful. Top right: a close-up of a woman's face with a tear on her cheek. Bottom left: a parrot. Bottom middle: a woman in a blue top presenting a screen that says 'ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT'. A blue circle is in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

Slide 5

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?

Think of a conversation you have been putting off

Got it?.....Let's GO!



The slide contains text and an image of three sticky notes. The text asks the user to think of a conversation they've been putting off and then says 'Got it?.....Let's GO!'. The image shows three yellow sticky notes with pink borders. A blue circle is in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

Slide 6

How do you handle difficult conversations?



The slide contains text and an image of two men in a meeting. The text asks 'How do you handle difficult conversations?'. The image shows two men sitting at a table; one is pointing at a screen. A blue circle is in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 7

**AVOIDANCE**

- Fear of unknown consequences
- Losing the relationship
- Being the object of anger
- Being hurtful
- Being perceived as bad



A cartoon illustration of a brown cardboard box with a face. The box has two large white eyes with black pupils and a small black mouth. On the side of the box, the words "THIS WAY UP" are written in black, with a downward-pointing arrow below them. A blue circle is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

Slide 8

**THE DILEMMA**



A photograph showing a person's feet in red sneakers standing on a grey carpet. In front of the feet is a wooden floor with two black arrows pointing in opposite directions. The arrow pointing left is labeled "Inaction" and the arrow pointing right is labeled "Action". A blue circle is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

Slide 9

**INACTION**

If you don't act now then you could:

- Mislead the person by giving them the impression that there is no problem
- Rob the other person of the opportunity to improve
- Damage the productivity and efficiency of your library
- Lower the morale among others
- Things could get worse.....



A photograph of a person sitting on a thick, gnarled tree branch. The person is wearing a green shirt and is looking down. The background shows green foliage and a blue sky. A blue circle is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 10

**ACTION**

- Strengthens relationships
- Anxiety decreases
- Trust and respect flourish



“Difficult conversations provide an opportunity to increase morale, develop collaboration, and foster positive workplace” - Farrell

●

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 11

**PREP WORK**



●

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

Slide 12

**COMMUNICATION: THE FACTS**

“It’s how you looked when you said it, not what you actually said.”\*

- 7% Words
- 38% Vocal (Tone)
- 55% Nonverbal



\* The Definitive Book of Body Language. Allan and Barbara Pease

●

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 13

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Active Listening
- Body Language
- Tone
- “I”
- Paraphrase
- Ask Questions
- Don’t “should on” people



A photograph showing a man in a suit and a woman in an orange top sitting at a round wooden table. They appear to be in a meeting or discussion, with the man looking towards the woman.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


Slide 14

WORKING ON YOURSELF

Outcomes

Assumptions      Awareness

Emotions      Attitude      Needs/Fears      Contribution



A hierarchical diagram with 'Outcomes' at the top in a large blue box. Below it are two boxes: 'Assumptions' and 'Awareness'. Under 'Assumptions' are 'Emotions' and 'Attitude'. Under 'Awareness' are 'Needs/Fears' and 'Contribution'.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 15

MISTAKES WE MAKE

- Reacting
- Over simplification
- Not enough respect
- Emotions
- Environment
- Straight talk
- Blame Game
- Generalities
- Threats



A photograph of a hand holding a red marker, writing the word 'mistake' in red cursive on a white surface. There are some smudges and a small red mark next to the word.

---

---

---

---

---

---

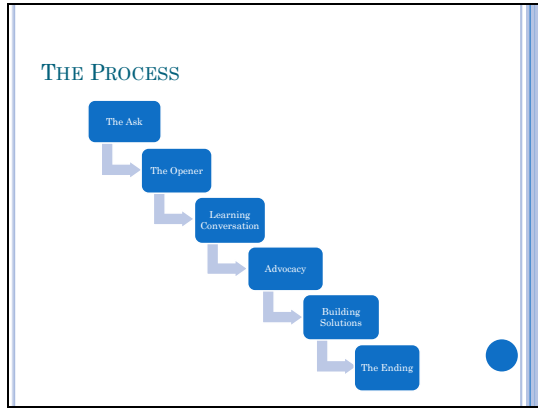
---

---

---

---

Slide 16



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 17

THE ASK



“How to Ask to Have The Conversation”  
- Dalhousie University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EETJXvMGO0s>

The slide features the title 'THE ASK' in the top left. In the top right, there is a black icon of two overlapping speech bubbles. The main text is centered and reads '“How to Ask to Have The Conversation” - Dalhousie University'. At the bottom left, there is a YouTube link. A small blue circle is in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 18

THE OPENER

An opening statement or introduction to the conversation should be clear about the purpose of the meeting or conversation.

- State the problem
- Why it is important
- Impact on performance and/or organization
  - Specific incidents should be used as evidence of behavior or performance linked with the impact of the issue.

The slide is titled 'THE OPENER'. Below the title is a paragraph defining an opening statement. This is followed by a bulleted list with three main points: 'State the problem', 'Why it is important', and 'Impact on performance and/or organization'. The third point has a sub-bullet: 'Specific incidents should be used as evidence of behavior or performance linked with the impact of the issue.' A small blue circle is in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 19

**THE OPENER**

- o I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- o I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- o I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about \_\_\_\_\_. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspectives as well.
- o I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. I think we may have different ideas about how to \_\_\_\_\_.



---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 20

**PRACTICE!**

Write a possible opening for your conversation



---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

Slide 21

**LEARNING CONVERSATION**

**Inquiry**

- o Cultivate an attitude of discovery and curiosity.
- o Your reality may not be their reality.
- o Don't run on assumptions
- o Listen!
- o Ask open ended questions
- o Acknowledge that you've seen and understood
  - Paraphrase
  - Summarize the response



---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

Slide 22

“When you accept and honor people for who they are and what they are experiencing, they are more likely to open up and explore with you.”  
-Marcia Reynolds



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 23


**LEARNING CONVERSATION**

Sometimes Conversations Go Badly.....



“Video Demonstration of Difficult Conversations: Underlying Cause of a Performance Issue”  
-Dalhousie University

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrN0emxXg\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrN0emxXg_k)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

Slide 24

**ADVOCACY**

It's your turn!

- Bring up the issue- neutrally and factually
- Differentiate between person vs. behavior
- What has the person missed?
- Clarify your position
- What do you think?



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Slide 25

**BUILDING SOLUTIONS**

- Give them a benefit for changing
- Engage in negotiation
- Problem-Solving
- Formalize the agreement into a series of next steps



A small blue circle is located in the bottom right corner of the slide content area.

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

Slide 26

**THE END**

- Clarify and summarize
- Follow up with another meeting or discussion
- Documentation
- End with something positive
- Disengage



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Slide 27

**THREE THINGS**



A small blue circle is located in the bottom right corner of the slide content area.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

