



Identifying the Underlying Need

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 1

How do you recognize the underlying need for a meaningful conversation? How do you use language that makes you feel safe and lets you be vulnerable at the same time? Is it possible to have a meaningful conversation where you can express the underlying need without becoming a “softy” or “pushover” or “bulldozer”?

The truth is that you can have meaningful conversations, but it requires work. If you can't figure out why you need to have the conversation, why it matters to you, why it's important to you — which is often beyond the surface level conversation most of us end up having — you won't be able to get the results you want. You'll have a hard time getting the dialogue right.

When the underlying need is unclear, conversations become stifled and most of us resort to forms of communication we've grown up with — debate, silent treatments, manipulation, half-hearted compromises, one-sided resolutions, force, power plays, and so on. We all know, these are unhealthy and don't serve us in the long run.

This workshop is designed to help you understand your underlying need for the conversation.

In this workshop you'll learn how to:

- Understand yourself first and why the conversation matters to you
- Stay focused on the need versus getting distracted in meaningless conversation
- Focus your brain to pay attention to your verbal and nonverbal language
- Return the conversation to language that supports the underlying need

Creating a Safe Space for Dialogue

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 2

As people begin to feel unsafe in conversation, they start down one of two unhealthy paths in their communication. They move either toward silence (withholding meaning from the conversation) or violence (trying to force meaning in the conversation). Both restrict the flow of meaningful conversation.

We use silence as a means to regain safety in a conversation. Unfortunately, silence can be deadly for a meaningful conversation. When we use sarcasm or sugarcoat what we say to mask our opinions or thoughts, steer clear and stay away from difficult topics altogether to avoid talking about them, or withdraw from the conversation by checking out or simply leaving the room — we are killing the conversation in an effort to feel safe.

Or we use violence to regain safety in a meaningful conversation. Violence can be subtle or overt, and yet is equally destructive. When we try to control the conversation, label ideas and people as less than, or outrightly attack others for thinking differently, we are derailing a safe space for dialogue. We do this to feel safe in the conversation ourselves, even though it destroys the conversation altogether.

This workshop is designed to help you create a safe space for dialogue.

In this workshop you'll learn how to:

- Recognize your style of communication under stress and in an unsafe space
- How to get back to a safe space for dialogue by looking for mutual understanding
- Provide an apology where you've created stress or unease in the conversation
- Use contrast to fix any misunderstandings in the conversation

Using Compassionate and Empathetic Language

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 3

Too often, we use language that blocks compassion and alienates us from our natural state of empathy. How can we care for others when our language blocks us from even caring for ourselves?

Meaningful conversations can't be had without compassion and empathy. When we judge others, analyze their faults, evaluate or criticize them, classify and compare individuals, or deny our own role and fail to take responsibility, we are, in fact, using language that alienates us.

Compassion and empathy allow us to have meaningful conversations that lead to big wins, break down walls, build bridges, and create connection. This workshop is designed to help you use compassionate and empathetic language in conversations that matter most to you.

In this workshop you'll learn how to:

- Differentiate between alienating language and connecting language
- Listen for connection, express needs, and take responsibility for feelings
- Engage in shared power through compassion and understanding
- Be present in the conversation to build empathy and rapport

Being Responsible and Receptive

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 4

Taking responsibility for your narrative is paramount to your success or failure in having meaningful conversations. Too often we get lost in our emotions, actions, and reactions that we lose sight of what is driving us to say and behave in the ways we do. When emotions are high, meaningful conversation can be extremely hard.

That's why you need to learn how to be responsible and receptive.

Being responsible and receptive means three things: recognizing your narrative, own your story, and guide the outcome. In order to do this, you need to pay attention to your internal dialogue, body language, and perspective.

By taking ownership of your story and being curious about another's story, you create room for meaningful dialogue and action. It's from this point, you can move toward real change.

In this workshop you'll learn how to:

- Notice your behavior to move toward dialogue versus away from it
- Get in touch with your emotions and identify the feelings behind your story
- Analyze your stories and look for alternative conclusions and other explanations
- Get back to the facts and abandon the absolute certainty of your narrative
- Watch for derailing stories that make you the victim, villain, or helpless
- Explore others' stories by using four powerful listening tools

Creating Understanding and Agreement

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 5

When you're having a conversation, are you in dialogue or are you just playing games? Conversations aren't just dialogue. They're meant to serve as an opportunity to get to a point of understanding. If done really well, they get you to a place of agreement, too.

Creating understanding and agreement requires the ability to validate, include, and value all perspectives in the conversation. This isn't an easy feat. It means you have to be willing to let go of your perspective to hear another's, be honest with yourself about your thoughts and feelings, understand and own your story, and most importantly be a team player.

In a team, sometimes you lead and sometimes you follow. You've got to be able to do both to build understanding and agreement. Above all else, you've got to understand that you're on the team and you've got to agree to be a team player.

In this workshop, you'll learn how to:

- Recognize when you're not being understanding or are out of agreement
- Value accountability and the importance of keeping the team focused and in agreement
- Speak up when you or your teammate aren't able to stay on course
- Leverage empathy and compassion to ensure understanding of yourself and others
- Watch for cues that may take you off-course or out of agreement

Taking Meaningful and Clear Action

Meaningful Conversations: Workshop 6

Having meaning and understanding in a conversation doesn't mean you're going to take clear action to move the needle forward toward your goal. This is because dialogue is not decision-making. Just because you understand each other, doesn't mean you or others will know what to do next.

Taking meaningful and clear action requires two things: clear language and meaningful action. The goal of a conversation is to move you forward to the next step. In order to do that, you've got to ensure that the action that comes out of the conversation is meaningful and that the language used to establish it is clear.

Too often, people get to a point of meaningful conversation but fall short on meaningful action because the language is unclear, not concise, too soft, non assertive, or not appropriately stated. This defeats the purpose of the conversation altogether.

In this workshop, you'll learn how to:

- Ensure meaning is stored to the conversation before moving to action
- Make decisions about what happens next, who does what, and by when
- Use clear and concise language when establishing actions steps
- Check for understanding to make sure what comes next is understood by all
- Hold each other accountable with spelled-out accountability actions
- Celebrate small and large actions that support the outcome