

# Leadership Bites: Self Management with Difficult Conversations

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES



Leadership Academy

South East

## Introduction

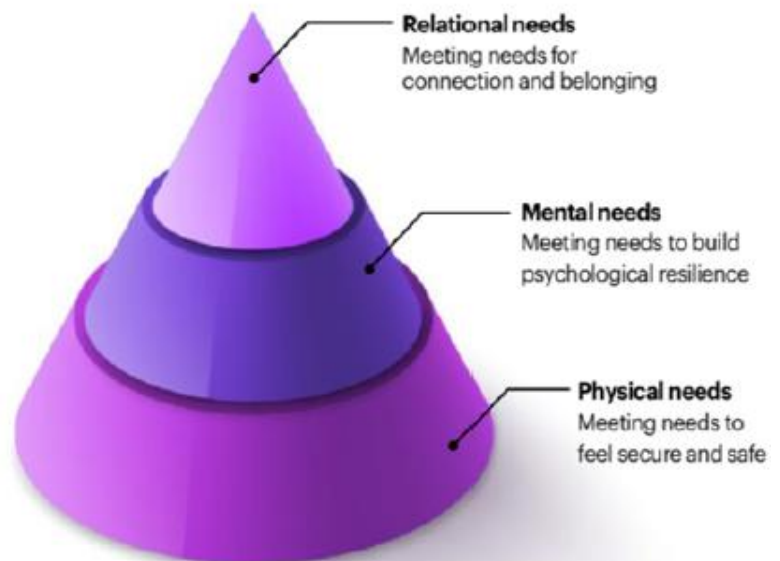
Three fundamental human needs must be met;

- Physical needs
- Mental needs
- Relationship needs

People are looking to their leader for stability, and that means being able to trust that their safety and wellbeing is top priority as well as having clarity of immediate business direction.

You need to start with physical needs, and then work your way up. Once people feel safe and secure, they're open to learning new skills. If they feel confident about the future and their place in it, they'll be more inclined to take risk and problem solve together.

Don't be daunted – it looks like a lot to balance but people just want to feel confident in their ability to contribute. To be able to do that, they need to trust that as their leader – you've got this.



## Listen and let them talk..

The topics here require you to listen and let the individual talk.

These are topics that you are not able to control. However, you can help the person by letting them express how they are feeling, think about their own solutions, take ownership and support them if needed.



## Listen, and don't solve...

Listen and given them space to express themselves – don't seek to solve the issue:

- Show you are listening
- Show empathy NOT sympathy – this is their conversation and feelings
- These types of conversations may require more time and a consideration of the environment

The beauty of the framework is its simplicity – it can be applied to many different conversations.

It can easily be used for individual and group conversations and the model focuses on: listening first, then demonstrating empathy and finally questioning. The model is not generally used for performance and development conversations, however it may be necessary to bring it in if the underlying need relates to one of the topics.

Use the 3A framework below to work through how you can listen, and help management yourself during difficult conversations.

### Absorb

Be there. Be present. Observe. Don't hide. Take it in.

Be the outlet that person needs. Take the emotional punches. Let them get everything out. Take it. Don't retaliate, defend or solve. Just listen; actively.

Encourage everything to be said; help them drain the well dry – you may be the only outlet they have. Hold silence - it'll give both of you chance to pause and breathe.

'Say more about that...'

'Keep going...'

'What else...'

'I want to hear it all...'

'Carry on...'

'Tell me more...'

### Acknowledge

Empathise genuinely. Don't patronise. Share in vulnerability. Indicate your recognition of the worry/problem. Mean what you say, say what you mean. Use normal language.

'It sounds so difficult; you're making people's lives that much easier even if they aren't telling you...'

'I'm here. I'm with you. I want to help...'

'I'd feel exactly as you've described. I don't want to imagine how it would be if you weren't here doing this...'

'I'm sorry you're going through this. I hear what you're saying; it makes complete sense...'

'Thank you for being so honest with me; it's what's needed...'

### Ask

Understand what the person or situation needs right now. Ask questions to help resolve or support. Decide whether the person needs direction, coaching or something else.

Key Questions:

'What do you need right now?'

'How can I best help you?' 'Who else can help?'

Others:

'What's already been tried?' 'What's worked?' 'What hasn't?'

'What do you need to best support our team/members?'

'If you were in my shoes – what would you do?'

'How can we lift morale right now?'

### Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the [People.NHS.uk](http://People.NHS.uk) website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



# Time to reflect...

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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

