

Leadership Bites: Challenging Conversations 1

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

NHS

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Introduction

When you've got a good relationship with someone, you automatically have 'more permission' to go there with a challenging conversation. Investing time, even small incremental amounts, can make a big difference to the way the conversation goes.

Key Insight: From an evolutionary perspective, it's crucial to know whether a person deserves our trust. When you need to build relationships fast, focus here first. Amy Cuddy – Social Psychologist, Harvard.

Building trust

We build trust when we're ensuring that people are Seen, Heard and Understood.

When you know you don't yet have someone's trust, think about how you can focus on these 3 critical areas.

How can you demonstrate that you 'see' them and recognise them as a person not a problem?

What can you do to listen fully and be present?

How will you show that you've understood their perspective?

Radical Candor

When we tell people the truth, not just what they want to hear, even greater levels of trust are built. The challenge for us, is that often we're told a couple of key messages from a young age which tends to stay with us through our working lives.

- 1) When we're younger: "If you can't say anything nice, don't say it at all".
- 2) When we start work: "Be professional".

These 2 factors in combination can lead us to either pussyfoot around and not share the words that people may really need to hear and/or lose our compassion and humanity towards those we work with.

Kim Scott, the author of Radical Candor, makes the point that it's quite radical for people to focus on both "Caring personally" and "Challenging people directly" when they're in conversation. And it's when we have those 2 factors in combination that we can both build solid, trusting relationships AND tell people what they need to hear.

An imbalance can manifest into 3 types of unhelpful conversation styles: Obnoxious aggression (lack of care), Ruinous empathy (lack of challenge), Manipulative insincerity (lack of both)

Further learning ...

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



Radically Candid Feedback

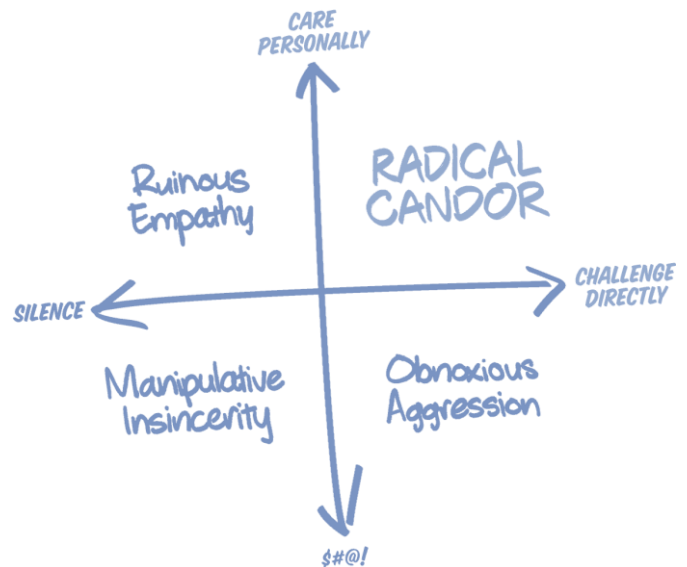
When your conversations are from a place of Radical Candor, you're being specific, clear, immediate and sincere. Because you're caring about the other person, you're wanting it to land well as opposed to damaging the relationship.

With that in mind, you'll be attuned to how your conversation is landing for the other person.

- Are they hearing what you're saying?
- Do they recognise it?

If not, you may need to repeat or re-iterate – but always from a place of positive intent, as opposed to offloading your own frustrations.

Over time, aim for a ratio of more positive than negative guidance. At least 5:1. This doesn't need to be in the same conversation but built up over a period of time.



Give it a go

Start with building a culture of radically relationships with others – focus on 4 areas:

- Get it (radical candour from others)
- Give it (radically candid feedback)
- Gauge it (see how it's landing)
- Encourage it (if others are focussing on the less productive conversation styles)

Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Who can I ask for feedback on my own approach?
- 2) How can I really encourage them to tell me the truth, not what they think I want to hear?
- 3) How will I avoid receiving that feedback defensively – to show that I'm OK with 'not being perfect'?
- 4) Who can I encourage to start operating in this way too?

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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?

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for writing reflection notes.

