



WUSM Pediatrics Leadership Development Series

Difficult Conversations

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A Smart
Place to
Work

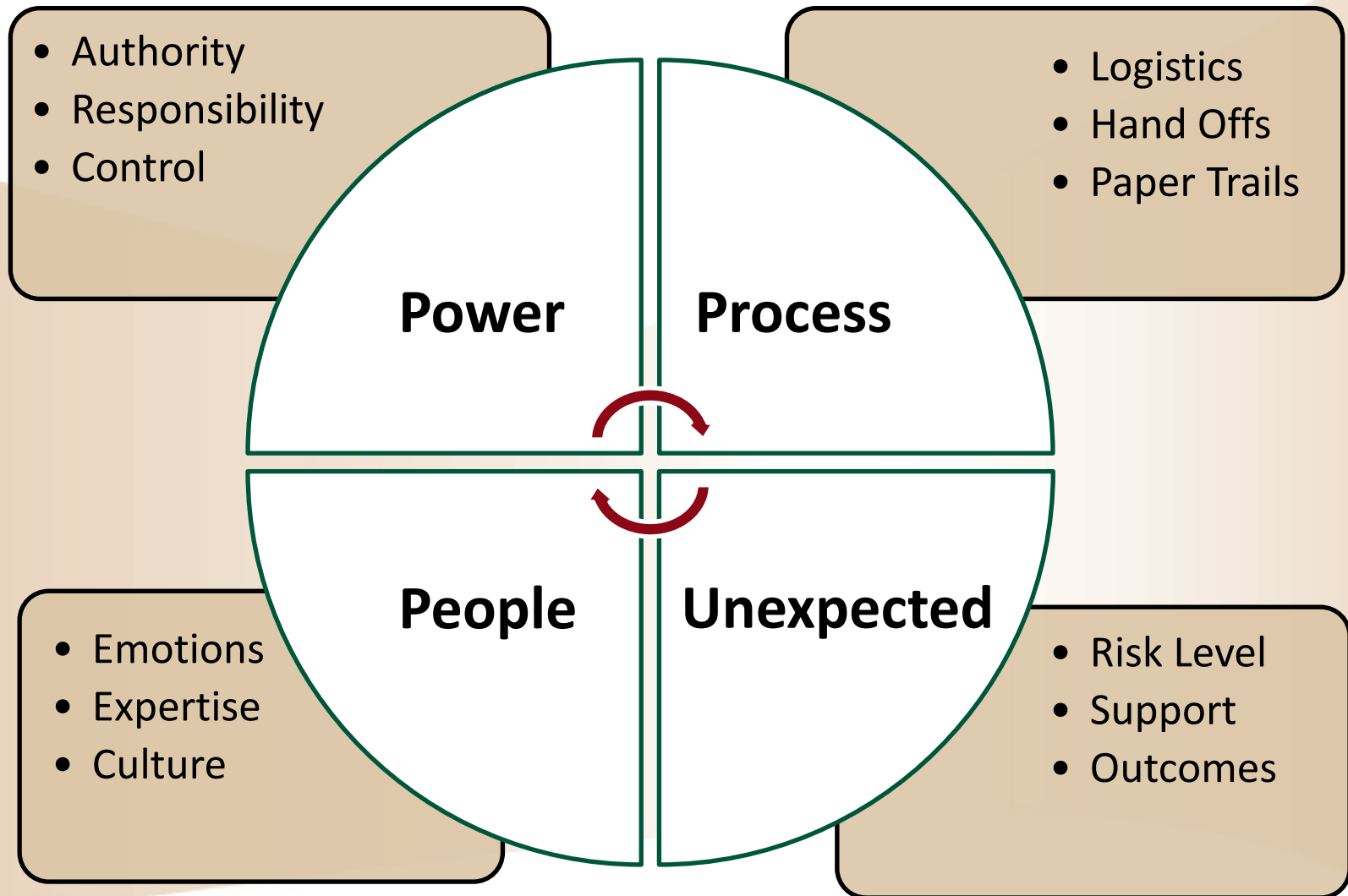
Introductions/Review

- *Anyone in the class who was not here last week? If so, please introduce yourself, tell us your job, and what you'd like to get from the training*

Factors That Can Aid or Hinder Communication

2011 Annette Veech, PhD

Recognition, Reward, or Blame?



Effective Communication

Streamlined Competency Model*

- *Lead by demonstrating expectations*
 - *Plan ahead to manage risk*
 - *Assess stakeholders' perspectives (logical vs. emotional)*
 - *Explain logic behind critical thinking, so all envision "one" outcome*
- *Communicate strategically*
 - *Focus on observable behaviors; avoid references to "attitude"*
 - *Listen actively without building defense; rephrase others' perspectives*
 - *Use active voice for action; passive voice for bad news*

*2011 Annette Veech, PhD

Effective Communication Streamlined Competency Model*

- *Manage the difficult moments*
 - *Clarify purpose and intended outcomes*
 - *Acknowledge feelings; ask variations of “five whys”*
 - *Reiterate, precisely and concisely, benefits of next steps and outcomes*

*2011 Annette Veech, PhD

Two Underlying Dimensions of Conflict-Handling Behaviors



Ideas for Communicating Precisely and Concisely

Structure What You Have to Say

- Compare to similar information
- Present new information
- “Chunk” the information
- State the most important information first
- Frame
- Use “five hat racks” (category, time, location, alpha, continuum)

Plan to Increase Retention

- Simplicity
- Surprise
- Concreteness
- Credibility
- Emotion
- Story
- von Restorff Effect (position unique words, concepts, images at critical points)

Manage Expectations

- Cost-benefit, from all perspectives
- Ockham’s Razor (use the simplest design)
- Scarcity (exclusive information; limited access, time or number; suddenness)

Prepare for Objections

- Be aware of cognitive dissonance (mental discomfort causes people to reduce the importance or add their own spin)
- Apply progressive disclosure (offer details in layers, to avoid overload)

Sources: *Universal Principles of Design*, by W. Lidwell, K. Holden, & J. Butler. The first six points in column two are drawn from Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point*

Difficult Conversations

- *Think of a conversation you had recently that was particularly difficult*
- *Write down three/four attributes that were present; ones that helped define the conversation as difficult*
- *Discuss your answers in your small group, create a composite and report to the larger group*

Six Basic Types of Difficult Conversations*

- *I have bad news for you*
 - *Have to deliver unwelcome information*
- *You are challenging my power*
 - *Boss thinks you put him/her on the spot*
- *I can't go there*
 - *Conflict averse; watch conversation/relationship deteriorate*

*2010 Holly Weeks, Failure to Communicate

Six Basic Types of Difficult Conversations

- *You win/I lose*
 - *Despite efforts to be cooperative; the other party needs to come out on top*
- *What's going on here?*
 - *Intensely charged and extremely confusing*
- *I'm being attacked!*
 - *On the offensive with accusations, profanity, shouts, and perhaps worse*

Three Basic Types of Hard Talk*

- *Combat mentality*
 - *The attitude that difficult conversations are battles with winners/losers*
- *Heavy emotional loads*
 - *Particularly anger, embarrassment, anxiety and fear*
- *Hard to read what is happening*
 - *Hard to read the others' intentions*

Difficult Conversations - Movie Clip

- *Let's revisit the movie **Ordinary People***
- *In this scene Beth and Cal travel to see her brother in Houston for a golf vacation*
- *Beth and Cal are having a great time, enjoying each other and the company of family*
- *Remember last week, you recognized that guilt, raw emotion, blame, grief and denial/avoidance were contributors to the dysfunction*
- *Afterwards in your groups, relate the scene to "Hard Talk", and discuss whether you have witnessed similar scenes play out at work*

Difficult Conversations*

- *Three “misguided” slants on handling tough conversations*
 - *Oversimplifying tough conversations*
 - *Pointing to “one thing” as the problem; subject/counterpart*
 - *Win or lose mentality*
 - *Win at my expense, payback; reluctance to back down or repair*
 - *Delusion of good intentions*
 - *I meant well, so this hard conversation shouldn’t happen*

*2010 Holly Weeks, Failure to Communicate

Difficult Conversations*

- *What's wrong with what we (they) do?*
 - *Each side thinks the trouble is the other side's fault*
 - *Our counterparts use “thwarting ploys” to get us to back off*
 - *We want to avoid confrontation*
 - *Our own emotions are in the way*
 - *Swing from pole to pole*
 - *Stick to one old standby*
 - *Resist skill*

*2010 Holly Weeks, Failure to Communicate

Difficult Conversations*

- *The way through them:*
 - *Self respect*
 - *Helps us stabilize in the face of our own emotional reaction*
 - *Respect for your counterpart*
 - *A willingness on our side to look at our counterpart's interests and concerns*
 - *Respect for the conversation itself*
 - *We see the problem as a feature of the conversation vs. the "problem is you"*

Difficult Conversations

- *Balance within*
 - *Move in from the poles; finding middle ground*
- *Balance within the two sides*
 - *We are not “clairvoyant”; don’t make assumptions and likewise don’t assume our counterpart knows what we are thinking*
- *Move through the conversational landscape*
 - *Each aspect of the conversation is a part of the landscape; address the tough parts, keep moving*
- *Open new possibilities*
 - *When we stop seeing limited choices for behavior, additional outcomes become more visible*

Difficult Conversations

Let's do some work from your Primers

Difficult Conversations

- *Today I learned . . .*

Back Up Charts

Attributes of an Effective Communicator, You Said:

- *Good listener*
- *Reflective*
- *Summarizes*
- *Asks questions*
- *Straightforward/to the point*
- *Prepared*
- *Moves things forward*
- *Assertive*
- *Passionate*
- *Looks for common ground*
- *Focused*
- *Inclusive*
- *Sincere/honest*
- *Appropriate style*
- *Intentional*
- *Confident*
- *Respectful*
- *Clear voice/loud enough to be heard*
- *Good people skills*

Attributes of an Ineffective Communicator, You Said:

- *Not focused/beats around the bush*
- *No clear point/mixes ideas*
- *Does not listen*
- *Emotional/negative melt down*
- *Monotone*
- *Condescending*
- *Not engaged*
- *Inconsistent*
- *Unclear*
- *Manipulative*
- *Controls ideas*
- *Rushed*
- *Interrupts*
- *Disrespectful*
- *No eye contact*
- *Harsh*
- *Overpowering/bully*
- *Difficult to understand*
- *Lacks principles*

Issues Affecting the Relationship in the Movie Clip You Said:

- *Raw emotion*
- *Guilt*
- *Blame*
- *Authority*
- *Lack of clarity*
- *Grieving*
- *Father in denial/oblivious to the issues*