Supporting people and organizations to work, live and play well together, promoting personal wellness, resilience, empowerment and peace.

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Having Difficult Conversations with Parents

Designed and delivered by:
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Saying the right thing

• “Not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”

Author: George Sala
What is a difficult Conversation?
Difficult Conversations

• What is a difficult conversation?
• Reasons for them
• Changing our outlook on conversations
• How to make them easier
• Conversation prep
• Conversation Starters
What Makes Conversations Difficult?

• Embarrassing
• Shameful
• Unhappy news
• Disconfirming information
Exercise

• How much difficult conversations do you have and how often?
• What is a contributing factor?
Types of Conversations

• What happened conversations
• Feelings conversations
• Identity conversations
• Learning conversations
What Happened Conversations

• Disagreements about what happen
• Should happen
• Who said or did what
• Who is right or wrong
• Who is responsible or is to blame
Tends to be…

- Challenging
- Arguments
- Competition
- combativeness
Feelings Conversations

• Dealing with feelings
• Your feelings
• The other person's feelings
• Responding to anger, anxiety and feelings instead of the issues
Tends to be…

• Identity related
• What does this say about me?
• Defensive
• Protecting self-image
• persuasive
Learning Conversations

- Explore each others perspectives
- Share impact and relevance to both sides
- Share responsibility for the solution
- Address feelings with understanding – not judgement
- Create a shared or new experience for both
Tends to be…

• Informative
• Sharing
• Explorativo
• Open
• collaborative
Discussion

• What can you do to change your conversations?
• What assistance will you need?
Difficult Conversations

• “Jake had a tantrum today”
• “Harry said a swear word today”
• “Kyle had time out for inappropriate touching”
• “Jen stayed in today because she didn’t have a hat”
• “Eggy pushed another boy today resulting in him hitting his head on the pavement. We had to notify the other parents and they are very upset”.

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Changing our Conversation Loop

• Asking questions rather than laying down the law
• Try to learn how they feel?
• Ask how this information may change things?
• Ask how your policy and expectations may impact them?
• Offer to brainstorm solutions
Conversation Steps

- Plan for cooperation
- Cut out the drama
- Do not blame or accuse
- Master your emotions
- Set the time and place
- Think of the other persons sensitivity
- Think of a contingency step
- Develop conversation prep
- Develop conversation starters
- End with clear actions steps and follow-up
Set the Time and Place

• Where is the right place to have difficult conversations with parents?
• Who should be present?
Plan for Cooperation

- Begin as you intend to end
- Smile
- Develop a rapport
- Use the sandwich method
Cut out the Drama

• Don’t be an alarmist
• People are sensitive about their children
• State only the facts
• Don’t share your opinions
• Don’t resurrect the past
• Deal with one incident at a time
Discussion

• What is a barrier to learning conversations in your environment?
• List two suggestions on changing that
Don’t Blame or Accuse Parents

• This is not a trial
• People get defensive when they feel blamed or accused
• Show empathy not sympathy
• I understand you may be upset by this
• How can we support you and Eggy?
Master Your Emotions

• Your don’t have to like the parents
• Show courtesy and respect
• Show kindness
• Shield your anger
• Do not condescend
• Do not reprimand the parents
Think of the other person

• Knowing their mannerism, how might you begin the conversation?
• Is this a difficult parent?
• Is this a sensitive parent?
• Do you need help to relay this message?
Conversation Prep

• Clearly state your objective for the conversation
• Eg: “Hi Carol, how was your day? Eggy had a very busy and active day today. Can you please spare ten minutes for an update?” I will need you to sign off on our conversation. Is that okay with you?
Conversation Starters

• Start on a positive note
• “Carol, thanks for giving me the extra time to go over Eggy’s day. Its standard for us to have parents aware of certain actions and sometimes have them initial that we had the conversation. Eggy was full of energy and spunk today, part of that included a bit of pushing and shoving with another boy, which resulted in…..the other child falling and developing a mild concussion”.
End Your Conversation Well

• Both parties should commit to
• Consider options for solutions
• Get more information
• Talk to someone
• Explore resources
• Take a corrective action
• Set a time to follow-up and review
Summary

• Types of conversations
• Making conversations easier
• Conversation preps and straters
• Steps to learning conversations
• Ending conversations well
Reflections

• What is your take away?
• What will you do differently?