



“TOOLS FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS”

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1:00-2:15 PM

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TODAY

- Challenging conversations are deeply different
- There is no “one size fit all” way to handle them

What today will be:

- A (whirlwind!) sampling of tools and resources

What today won't be:

- A presentation from an HR professional
- A fix for discomfort



COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- Make “I” statements
- We don’t have to agree
- Be willing to be uncomfortable
- Expect and accept a lack of closure
- Practice curiosity vs. judgement
- We are all teachers and learners
- Center the voices of people who represent marginalized identities and who choose to share in this space

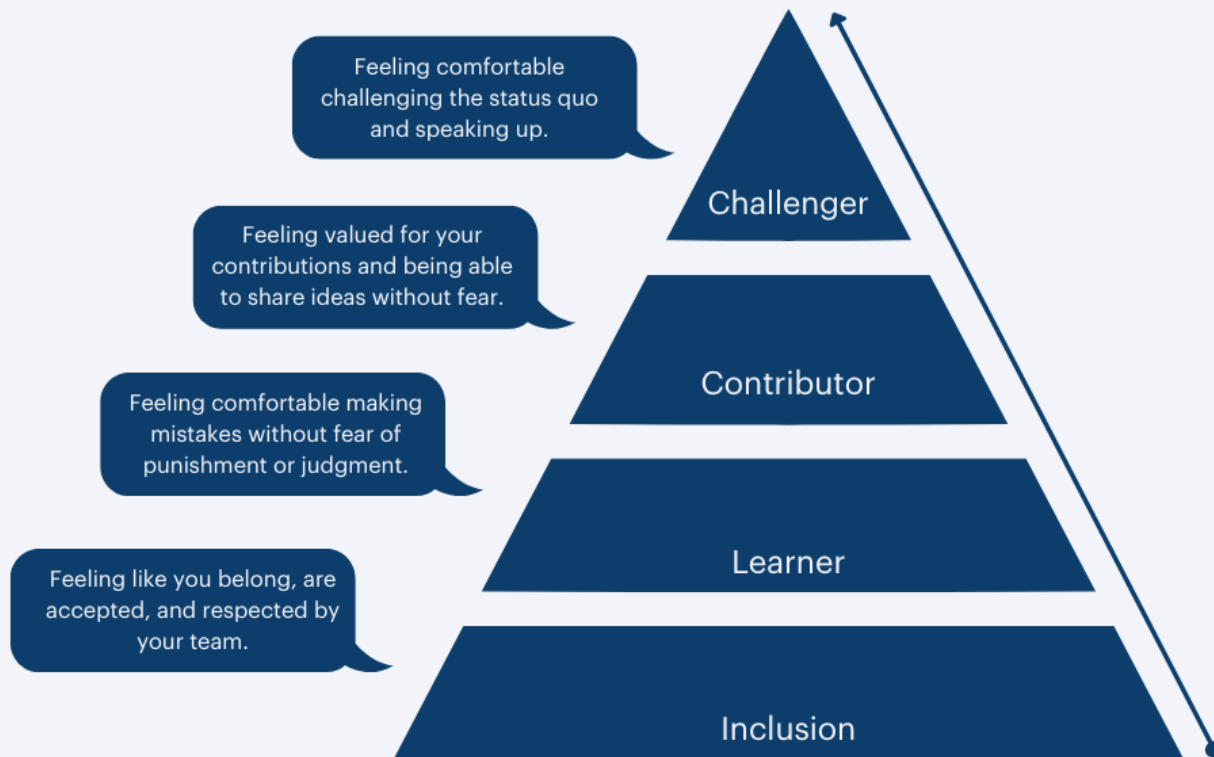
WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

"The belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" --Amy Edmondson, 1999

Shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences.

<https://psychsafety.co.uk/about-psychological-safety>

THE 4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



Resource: <https://nectarhr.com/blog/psychological-safety-at-work>



(SOME) BENEFITS
OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY

- More freedom to explore and improve ideas
- Reduction in burnout
- Improved ability for individuals to learn from mistakes
- Greater sharing of learning across group members
- Improved ability to carry out experiments and risk “intelligent failures”
- Improved ability to attract, recruit and retain the highest levels of talent
- Greater resilience of people and teams

This is psychological safety:

Freedom to share thoughts and ideas
Ability to express concerns
Allocating tasks when needed
A space where people feel a sense of ease and support
Taking measured and shared risks after considering potential outcomes
Everything is considered

Resource: HumanInterest

This is NOT psychological safety:

Saying anything you want
Letting emotions go in ways that harm others
Taking a “what will be, will be” approach
A space free of any inner discomfort
Taking risks and hoping for the best
Everything is tolerated

CREATE AND
MAINTAIN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY AT WORK



Prioritize concern for colleagues as people



Actively solicit questions



Model fallibility: own up to and discuss mistakes (and learnings!)



Explain reasons for change



Be precise with information and share it frequently



Provide multiple ways for team members to share input and show appreciation and follow-through on that input

DISCUSSION:
WHAT MAKES
CONVERSATIONS
“CHALLENGING”?

What emotions
come up before or
during challenging
conversations?

What do we fear?

Challenging Conversations: Potential Steps

Plan and Prepare

- Consider logistics
- Consider power and advantage

Engage

- Use the Five Point Formula
- Practice active and reflective listening
- Ask, "How would you like me to listen?"
- Find shared values
- Self-regulate

Follow-up

- Understand that resolution is not guaranteed
- Accept responsibility
- Agree on conditions of follow-up

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS: PLAN AND PREPARE

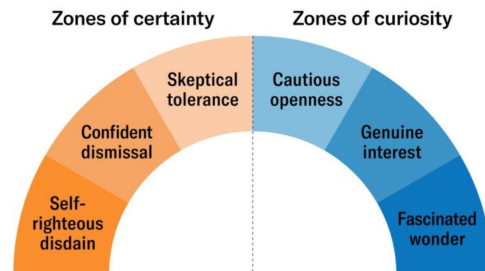


CONSIDER INTENT

- What is your purpose for having the conversation?
- What assumptions are you making about this person's intentions?
- How is your attitude toward the conversation influencing your perception of it?
- What might the other person be thinking about this situation? Are they aware of the problem?
- What are your needs and fears?
- How have you contributed to the problem?

The Curiosity Curve

Before high-stakes conversations, gauge whether you're actually open to vital new information from your counterpart.



Self-righteous disdain



"I can't stand them!"
"They're mad, bad, or scary!"

Confident dismissal



"They're mistaken, incompetent, or out of line."
"I'm right!"

Skeptical tolerance



"I think they're wrong but I'll hear them out."

Cautious openness



"Hmm...they could know something worth finding out."

Genuine interest



"I truly want to understand their views and experience."

Fascinated wonder



"Wow! There's so much I want to learn—from, with, and about them!"

www.askapproach.com

Source: Jeff Wetzler, inspired by Braver Angels' "The Emotional and Intellectual Transformation of De-Polarization"



The "Curiosity Curve"

CONSIDER LOGISTICS

Seek
Consent

If initiating, seek consent to have the conversation

Don't be
Coy

Don't be coy about the topic; allow the other person to prepare

Use a
Neutral
Location

Use a neutral location and find a time that is mutually agreeable and accessible

POWER

The capacity of individuals or groups to bring about change by:

- influencing people
- affecting one's environment
- addressing personal or group needs
- pursuing desires
- protecting interests
- defining issues, setting agendas, and expanding or limiting the scope of discussion
- determining who can participate in decision making and how



TOOL/THEORY: FIVE
BASES OF POWER
(FRENCH AND RAVEN,
1959)

Legitimate Power

Based on
position or
formal authority

Reward Power

Promising or
granting rewards

Coercive Power

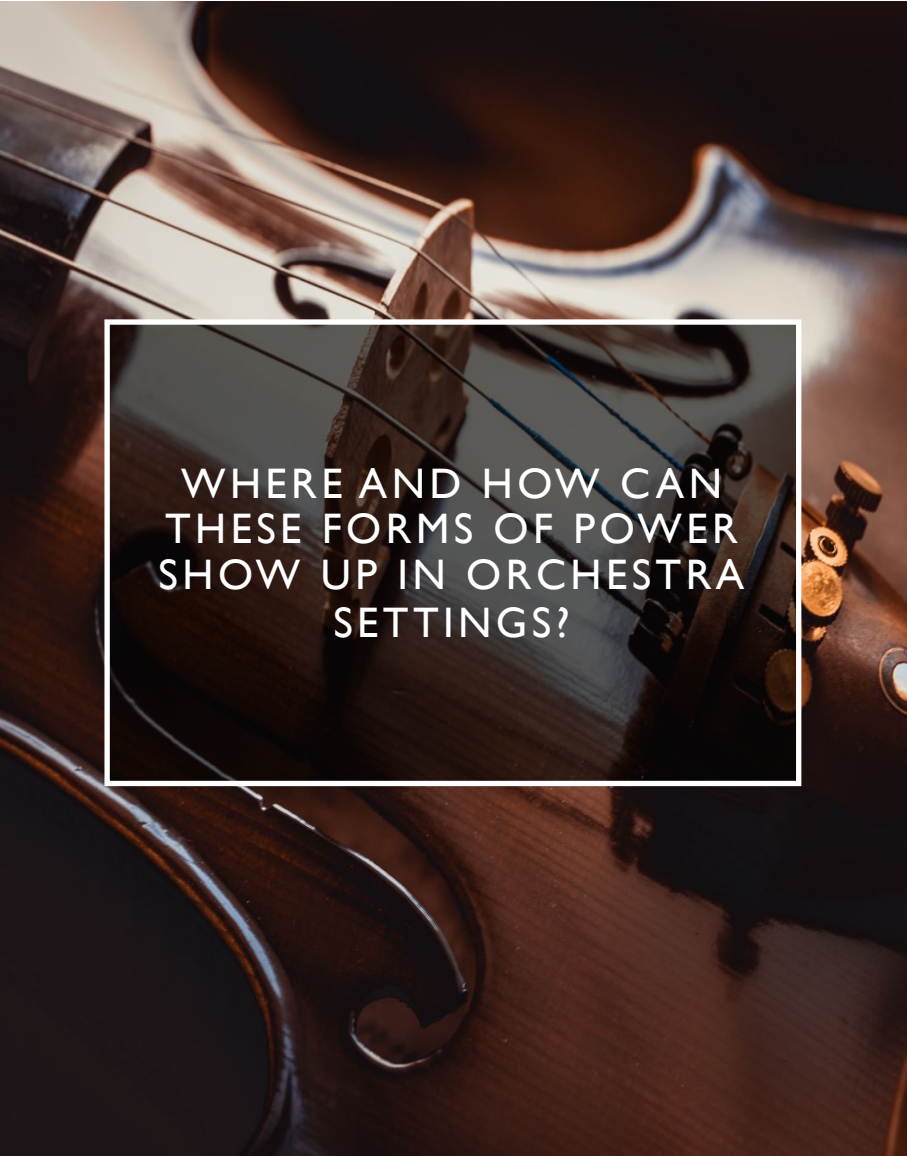
Threatening or
punishing

Referent Power

Power of
personality
(charisma)

Expert Power

Being perceived as
having important
knowledge or skill



WHERE AND HOW CAN
THESE FORMS OF POWER
SHOW UP IN ORCHESTRA
SETTINGS?

Legitimate Power

Based on
position or
formal authority

Reward Power

Promising or
granting rewards

Coercive Power

Threatening or
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Referent Power

Power of
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CONSIDER POWER AND IDENTITY



A team is only as psychologically safe as the least safe person on the team

Individuals who hold the least psychological safety tend to be those who represent marginalized identities

“Structural inequalities create steeper gradients for some people than for others, which means the personal cost of speaking up is higher for people who are already marginalized or disadvantaged. Psychological safety programs that ignore this — that treat the team as a level playing field, or that measure average safety without attending to who is least safe — do not actually address the problem. They address the experience of the already comfortable.

<https://psychsafety.co.uk/about-psychological-safety/>

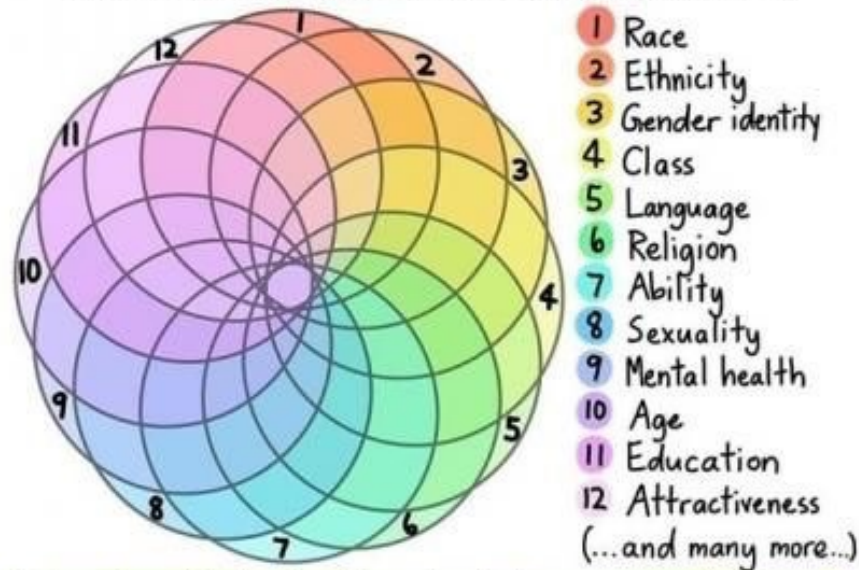
WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth

INTERSECTIONALITY



Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

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CONFLICT NAVIGATION

The Average U.S. Employee: Spends roughly **2.8 hours per week** dealing with interpersonal conflict

Managers: Spend about **4 hours per week** (roughly 10% of their total work time) dealing with interpersonal conflict

High
Importance of achieving goal
Low

Competing

One party seeks to satisfy interest regardless of impact to other party

Collaborating

Both parties win

Compromise

Both parties win and give up something

Avoiding

One or both parties seek to suppress the conflict

Accommodating

One party yields the win to the other party

Importance of relationship

Low

High

LESS POSITIONAL POWER: CONSIDERATIONS

- Name how you wish to be listened to
- Name your needs and preferred communications style(s)
- Frame questions/concerns with ideas from your functional area
- Lean into your power as an expert in your area

MORE POSITIONAL POWER: CONSIDERATIONS

- Encourage clarifying questions of all types, without shame
- Consider different learning and communications style(s)
- Avoid interrupting
- It's ok to say "I don't know"
- Be honest when it will take time for change to happen ("not right now")
- Frame work as being about learning, not just execution
- Acknowledge your own fallibility

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS: ENGAGING

INITIATOR

- **I Care:** Let the person know you care about him/her and that because of the significance of the relationship you need to discuss something very important.
- **I See:** Report/Review actual events, as you perceive them.
- **I Feel:** Tell the person your own feelings using “I statements”
- **I Wonder:** Tell the person what you are wondering about — is everything OK? Is there something you want to talk about?
- **I Will:** Specify what you will or will not do.

DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS:
THE FIVE POINT
FORMULA

Adapted from University of Massachusetts, Amherst Health Services, Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program, and The BACCHUS Network.

LISTENER

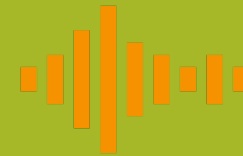
LISTENER: ASK FOR CLARITY



How would you like me to listen?

To problem-solve with you/with an ear toward solutions?

To be present with you/allow space for you to process?



“Should I offer help/feedback, or would you prefer I just listen?”

INITIATOR AND LISTENER

ACTIVE LISTENING

Use “I” statements

Listen deeply; note when you are “listening to respond”

Ask open ended questions; ask clarifying questions

Stick to talking about the issue

Hear and note feedback

Avoid shaming and blaming

Separate the issue from the person (where possible)

Brainstorm shared solutions (for issues requiring a resolution)



ACTIVE VS. REFLECTIVE LISTENING

- Active listening- signaling that you are listening
 - Conversation indicators: asking questions, offering feedback
 - Physical indicators: nodding, staying physically present (no screens, etc.)
- Reflective listening
 - Listener is paraphrasing back
 - Short statements that mirror back or summarize what was heard
 - “You are frustrated”; “You want help with this issue”
 - Can also be a check for accuracy
 - “**It sounds as though** you feel you aren’t receiving enough support on this project. Is this accurate?”

POSITIONS VS. INTERESTS VS. VALUES

- Positions tend to lead conversations
- Interests and values are often similar and/or hidden
- ASK: Where might you have overlapping values?
- **RESOURCE: Difficult Conversations (Stone, Patton and Heen)**

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS: FOLLOW-UP

FOLLOW-UP



UNDERSTAND THAT
RESOLUTION IS NOT
GUARANTEED



ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY



AGREE ON CONDITIONS OF
FOLLOW-UP

AGREE ON CONDITIONS OF FOLLOW-UP



Confirm key points of your discussion



Check what needs to be done next



What actions will be taken, and by when?



Plan for another time to meet again (if helpful)

PRACTICE



PRACTICE

Break into trios (if and as you wish)

- One person takes the role of initiator, one the listener, one the observer
- Assume that in each scenario, you both wish to have the conversation

Initiator: practice using the Five Point Formula

Listener: practice asking how to listen; active and reflective listening

Observer: give feedback regarding use of tools



PRACTICE SCENARIO

Initiator Perspective: You are in the midst of preparing for a major event next week and you were just asked by your manager to jump into a new project involving an external partner that has a tight turnaround. You are feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and unsure you can do your best because of burnout.

Listener Perspective: You are the manager and while you have a clear sense of role responsibilities, you don't know the details of the day-to-day experiences of your team members. You know that everyone on your team is giving their all. You are personally under water with work needs and pressures with no end in sight.

Observer

Difficult Conversations: Potential Steps

Plan and Prepare

- Consider logistics
- Consider power and advantage

Engage

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DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS:
THE FIVE POINT
FORMULA

Want to sign up for
periodic email
updates and/or
send me session
feedback?

SCAN ME!



THANK YOU!

JESSICA@ORCHESTRATEINCLUSION.COM

ORCHESTRATEINCLUSION.COM

Services Include:

- Organizational culture work and measurement
- Orchestra-specific learning and development workshops
- Support around building equitable audition, tenure, trial week and substitute musician processes
- Design and facilitation of retreats and group work
- Strategic planning partnership
- Leadership coaching

