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Leadership Tips for Conflict Situations



JESSIE SUTHERLAND

➔ **In our most recent cohort** from the "Belonging Matters Conversations (BMC) For Leaders" sessions, leaders discussed how they deal with aggressive behaviour. Here are 5 tips they came up with for how to move forward when a conflict includes feeling threatened.

1. Take a breath and find safety.

Finding a sense of safety is an important first step. Our BMC leaders suggest that you start by taking a deep breath and asking yourself, "Am I safe?"

If your immediate physical and psychological safety is at risk, you may choose to leave the situation or get help. If your inner safety has been rattled, the leaders suggest you tend to your inner landscape. Consider how you can take care of yourself mentally (what story am I telling myself about this situation?) and physically (what can I do to tend to my body?).

Getting in touch with the values you stand for and your needs can be a powerful way to create the inner safety you need to be able to work through this problem.

2. Honour the contributions of the other person.

Listen for the unmet needs underlying aggressive behaviour. When we recognize the contributions and experiences of the other person, it builds a bridge of understanding and can diffuse the situation. In recognizing the other, we acknowledge the other person has a story, experiences, and worldviews. This recognition also reminds us that the person with whom you are in conflict is a fellow human worthy of being listened to with respect.

3. Remember YOU create your own story.

Just as honouring the other person's contributions helps humanize the other person, remembering that you are also a person worthy of being heard humanizes you. You bring your own story, experiences, and worldviews to the table and also deserve to be listened to respectfully.



Remember . . . another's story is not your story.

Not only is their aggression not yours, you don't have to take on their emotions, projections, or experiences. In fact, you get to create your own story in the way you respond to the situation.

4. Move forward together.

Invite the person to join you in finding a solution to the issue together. When you both put your focus on the problem rather than each other, it is so much easier to generate solutions that work for both of you.

In that way, you can move forward in a positive way that honours and respects both of you. In essence, you are inviting the other person to identify their underlying needs and create a new story together.

5. Negotiate respectful boundaries.

Be open, but specific. If you and the other person have agreed to work together, set boundaries that will make working together safe for both of you.

For example, depending on your cultural lens, you may agree to speak calmly and respectfully toward one another. Or you might agree not to throw things, raise voices, or use disrespectful language. Only the two of you know what kinds of boundaries make it safe for you. Everyone will come up with something different.

It's important that you want to be open to the other person and be specific in boundary-setting. Being specific helps make it clear how you expect (and how they expect) to be treated while you work together to solve the issue. Setting clear, respectful boundaries can be a powerful way to find safety and ultimately be the author of your own story and how this particular situation unfolds.

Take care of yourself.

Every leader in our program pointed to how important self-care is for navigating conflict and tricky situations that activate our core values within relationships that matter to us. Take some time for yourself and do what it takes to rest and rejuvenate.

Some top suggestions from leaders include yoga, mindful breathing, paying some bills, cleaning your home, reading a book, going for coffee with a friend, volunteering, gardening, and sleeping—the last one is the personal favourite of many leaders.

Closing Suggestion: Leaning on other leaders to help us cultivate a feeling of belonging helps establish a sense of safety to deal with the complexities of life in our everyday lives.

JESSIE SUTHERLAND is an excellent facilitator. Using her knowledge and experiences, she weaves research, personal experience, and anecdotal lessons together seamlessly.
www.BelongingForLeaders.ca