

Recipes

For Conversations That Work!



DialogueWORKS®



Handling Emotional Reaction

Everyone has at some time reacted negatively to something that someone else has said or done. The challenge in this situation is to restore the rationality to a conversation—rationality that seems to have left by the nearest exit. Unless rationality—what we call EASE—is re-established, the conversation cannot continue, or at very least the goal of the conversation will not be effectively achieved. This DialogueWORKS Recipe provides a variety of useful tools for handling the emotional reactions you may encounter in yourself and others.

In some circumstances, *no* recipe can be effective in defusing defensiveness. If this is the situation, we recommend that you hold the conversation after all parties have had sufficient time to regain their rationality, typically 48 hours. If you are involved in a conversation where the other party continues to display escalating negative or “hot” emotion, you would be wise to excuse yourself from the situation until a later time if such a delay is possible.

This DialogueWORKS Recipe will help you handle emotional reactions in conversation. It includes the following tools:

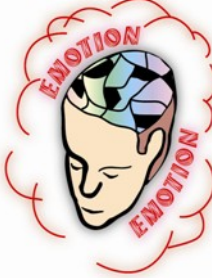
- ❖ **DialogueWORKS® Planner.** The Planner is designed to help you prepare for meeting with your team member. You should be aware that emotion in a conversation is something you can *prepare* for, but not necessarily *plan* for—while you may be able to predict that a person may react negatively during an interaction, you really cannot know what their response will be, simply because that response will be based on *their* emotions. Likewise, when someone becomes emotional, you cannot call a time out to figure out what to say, then return to the “scene of the crime” an hour later to pick up the conversation where you left off: you have to handle the emotional reaction when it occurs. You must be prepared in advance for an emotional reaction so that you can handle emotional situations in the moment.

Of course, you might find it necessary to hold a conversation about a past emotional reaction. You *can* effectively plan that conversation. The Planner for this Recipe has been completed from the perspective of holding a conversation about past negative reactions.
- ❖ **DialogueWORKS Conversation Guide.** The Conversation Guide is designed to help you prepare to navigate the conversation with your team member. You can use the recipe to learn the phases of the DialogueWORKS model as applied to handling emotion:
 - **Initiate** – Begin the conversation in a way that will acknowledge the current reaction.
 - **Discover** – Ask effective questions to explore the employee’s point of view and increase your understanding.
 - **Connect** – Come to a clear mutual understanding of areas of agreement and misunderstanding, as well as the stories, aim, and ego needs behind the emotion.
 - **Build** – Offer ideas or apologize, build ego, and clarify intent.
- ❖ **DialogueWORKS Commitment Plan.** The purpose of this document is to summarize the conversation and document the commitments made to achieve desired results. The Commitment Plan is applicable for conversations about previous emotional reactions, and will **not** be applicable for handling current emotional reaction in the moment.
- ❖ **Application Example.** This scenario is a real-life application of using the Planner and Conversation Guide to address an emotional reaction.

Handling Emotional Reaction: Recipe Tips

These “Cues and Do’s” reminders will help you manage an emotional reaction.

- ❖ Notice when people become **emotional or defensive**.
 - Remain calm.
 - Ask questions to defuse their defensiveness.
 - Have the person’s best interest at heart.




- ❖ Ask these questions to move from the **outside in**.
 - Lift the conversation above the line.

EMOTION Self: "What am I feeling?"
Others: "I can see that you're..."


STORIES "What's up?"

AIM "What is wanted?"

EGO "Why?"
"What is most important?"

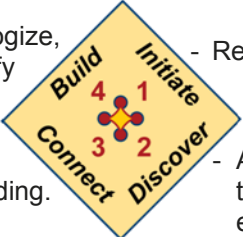


- ❖ Use the **EASE Model** to defuse the emotional reaction.
 - Emotion is the mask of meaning!



-Capability	-Likability
-Acceptability	-Security
-Respectability	
-Wants	
-Expectations	
-Events	-History
-Judgment	
-Tone	-Non-verbals
-Feelings	

- ❖ Use the **DialogueWORKS Process** to hold the conversation:
 - Offer ideas or apologize, build ego, and clarify intent.
 - Summarize your understanding.
 - Reflect emotion or action.
 - Ask questions to uncover the meaning behind the emotion.



Handling Emotional Reaction: Application Example Scenario

In this example, the DialogueWORKS Planner is completed from the perspective of holding a conversation with someone who frequently reacts emotionally. The DialogueWORKS Conversation Guide presents the skills for handling emotional reaction in the moment.

You meet one-on-one with Bill, who often becomes emotional. You simply state, “I want to talk to you about your work.”

Bill shouts back, “Now what?! Here we go again. What did I do now?”

You want to defuse Bill’s emotion and understand the source of his frustration.

DialogueWORKS® Planner (Application Example)

Note: This Application Example has been completed to help you talk about someone's recurring emotional reaction—after the fact.

Employee Name:

Date of Conversation:



Use the **GROW** process to help you identify your goals, focus on current reality, generate options, and decide what's next. Review and answer the questions on this Planner to aid you in preparing to hold the conversation.

GOALS

What are your goals for this conversation?

What is the specific performance, behavior, or result that is not meeting expectations?

What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your conversation with this individual?

To understand why Bill becomes emotional.

Becoming emotional shuts everyone else down in meetings and does not promote a professional demeanor.

I want Bill to become more self-aware and to develop more emotional intelligence.

REALITY

What is currently happening?

DATA:
What behaviors are impacting results?
What data support your observations?

INTERPRETATION:
What assumptions do you hold about the situation??

What might be some of the causes of the problem?

Bill responds negatively to comments that I and Jim make in meetings. This morning Bill became so mad, he had to leave the room.

Assumption: We have done something to offend Bill.

He could be unaware of how he comes across. Maybe I don't talk to him enough.

OPTIONS

What do you think might be done to solve the problem?

What other possible options might be employee identify?

What are some possible consequences if this behavior continues?

- Ask him what is going on!

- Anger at being given all the tough jobs?

- No support?

Disciplinary action: alienating others in the office.

WHAT'S NEXT

What might you do to support the person's efforts to resolve the situation?

What potential barriers may exist to resolving the situation or closing the performance gap?

How and when will you gauge progress or results?

I will identify the cause of Bill's emotional reactions and help him to develop the skills to manage himself more effectively.

-Denial!!!

I will observe his behavior in team meetings and in his interactions with me.

Note: Use these skills to handle emotion that arises *in the moment*.

ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

• Establish Accountability:

- Offer Ideas or Assistance:

"Do you want my advice?" _____
 "How can I help?" _____

If YOU caused the defensiveness, ABC it!

- Use Your ABC's:

> Apologize

"I am sorry that I... don't acknowledge your successes. I'll work on that.

> Build Ego

"I appreciate... all of the great work you do and the fact that I can count on you in a pinch!

> Clarify Intent

"I want to... talk about what really went well on the last project, not criticize your work.

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION



• Describe the Situation:

- Reflect the Emotion:

"I can see that you are (state the emotion) Upset.

or

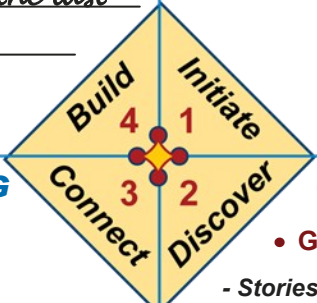
- Reflect the Action:

"I noticed that (identify the action) When I said I wanted to talk, you said, 'Now what? Here we go again!'"

It is important to make a **quick** Reflecting statement and move immediately to Discovery!

Use "I" Statements to present the data: "I observed....." or "I heard....."

CLARIFY UNDERSTANDING



• Clarify Understanding:

You feel frustrated
 because I don't talk to you unless you've messed up or I want something.
 You want me to talk to you at other times too, not just when something is wrong or when I want something.
 because of the importance of being valued for your work and having someone care about how you're doing.

Is that right?

Summarize and always end in a question to check for clarity.

GAIN UNDERSTANDING

• Gain Understanding:

- Stories:

"What's up?" _____
 or "What's going on?" [*The only time you talk to me is when I have messed up somehow or when you need something ASAP.]

- Aim:

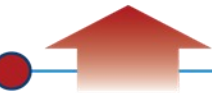
"What do/did you want?" [*I guess I'd like to know specifically 'Why' you want to talk. Or maybe it would be nice to talk sometime other than when you just want something from me.]

- Ego:

"Why? Why is that so important?" [*I really try to follow your instructions, but it seems like the only time you talk to me is when you are unhappy with what I've done (= Capability) or when you want something else. (=Respectability).]

Be patient. Ask enough questions to get the listener to tell their story.

[* These are the person's projected responses to the questions asked.]



DialogueWORKS® Planner

Note: This Application Example has been completed to help you talk about someone's recurring emotional reaction—*after the fact*.

Employee Name:

Date of Conversation:



Use the **GROW** process to help you identify your goals, focus on current reality, generate options, and decide what's next. Review and answer the questions on this Planner to aid you in preparing to hold the conversation.

GOALS

What are your goals for this conversation?

What is the specific performance, behavior, or result that is not meeting expectations?

What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your conversation with this individual?

REALITY

What is currently happening?

DATA:
What behaviors are impacting results?
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INTERPRETATION:
What assumptions do you hold about the situation??

What might be some of the causes of the problem?

OPTIONS

What do you think might be done to solve the problem?

What other possible options might be employee identify?

What are some possible consequences if this behavior continues?

WHAT'S NEXT

What might you do to support the person's efforts to resolve the situation?

What potential barriers may exist to resolving the situation or closing the performance gap?

How and when will you gauge progress or results?


Note: Use these skills to handle emotion that arises *in the moment*.

ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

• **Establish Accountability:**

- **Offer Ideas or Assistance:**

"Do you want my advice?" _____
 "How can I help?" _____

 If YOU caused the defensiveness, ABC it!

- **Use Your ABC's:**

> **Apologize**

"I am sorry that I..." _____

> **Build Ego**

"I appreciate..." _____

> **Clarify Intent**

"I want to..." _____



DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

• **Describe the Situation:**


- **Reflect the Emotion:**


"I can see that you are (state the emotion) _____

or

- **Reflect the Action:**

"I noticed that (identify the action) _____

 It is important to make a **quick** Reflecting statement and move immediately to Discovery!

 Use "I" Statements to present the data: "I observed....." or "I heard....."

CLARIFY UNDERSTANDING

• **Clarify Understanding:**


You feel _____

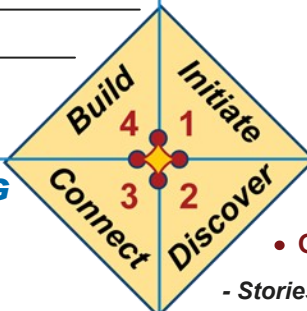
because _____

You want _____

because of the importance of _____

Is that right?

 Summarize and always end in a question to check for clarity.



GAIN UNDERSTANDING

• **Gain Understanding:**

- **Stories:**

"What's up?" _____


or "What's going on?" _____

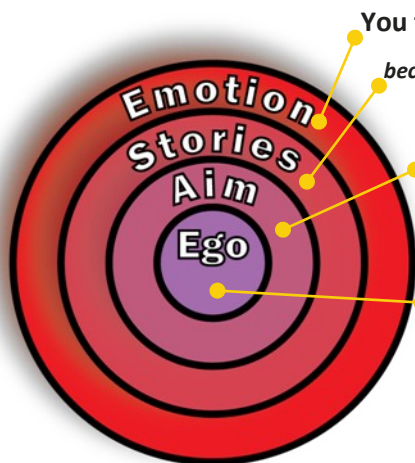
- **Aim:**

"What do/did you want?" _____

- **Ego:**

"Why? Why is that so important?" _____

 Be patient. Ask enough questions to get the listener to tell their story.



DialogueWORKS® Commitment Plan

This document summarizes our conversation and documents the commitments made to address concerns and achieve desired results.

Employee Name:		Date of Conversation:	
Subject of Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Summarize the nature of the conversation and the concerns expressed.			
Results Expected <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe your understanding of shared goals and expected behaviors and/or results.			
Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe the actions that will be taken to address concerns and achieve desired results.			
Follow-up <ul style="list-style-type: none">When will you meet again to review progress on the action plan?			
Consequences/Other <ul style="list-style-type: none">What are potential consequences if the performance concerns continue?			
Employee Signature:		Date:	
Manager Signature:		Date:	

This product has been created and developed through many hours of research and effort, and is protected by the copyright laws. Please demonstrate your inherent honesty and respect our property and the law by not providing copies to others. The recipes discussed here provide general principles that should be helpful in many circumstances. However, given the many variables that may affect each situation, we cannot guarantee any results from applying a specific recipe.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.