



Navigating Difficult Conversations

Massachusetts Nonprofit Network Conference,
October 20th 2015

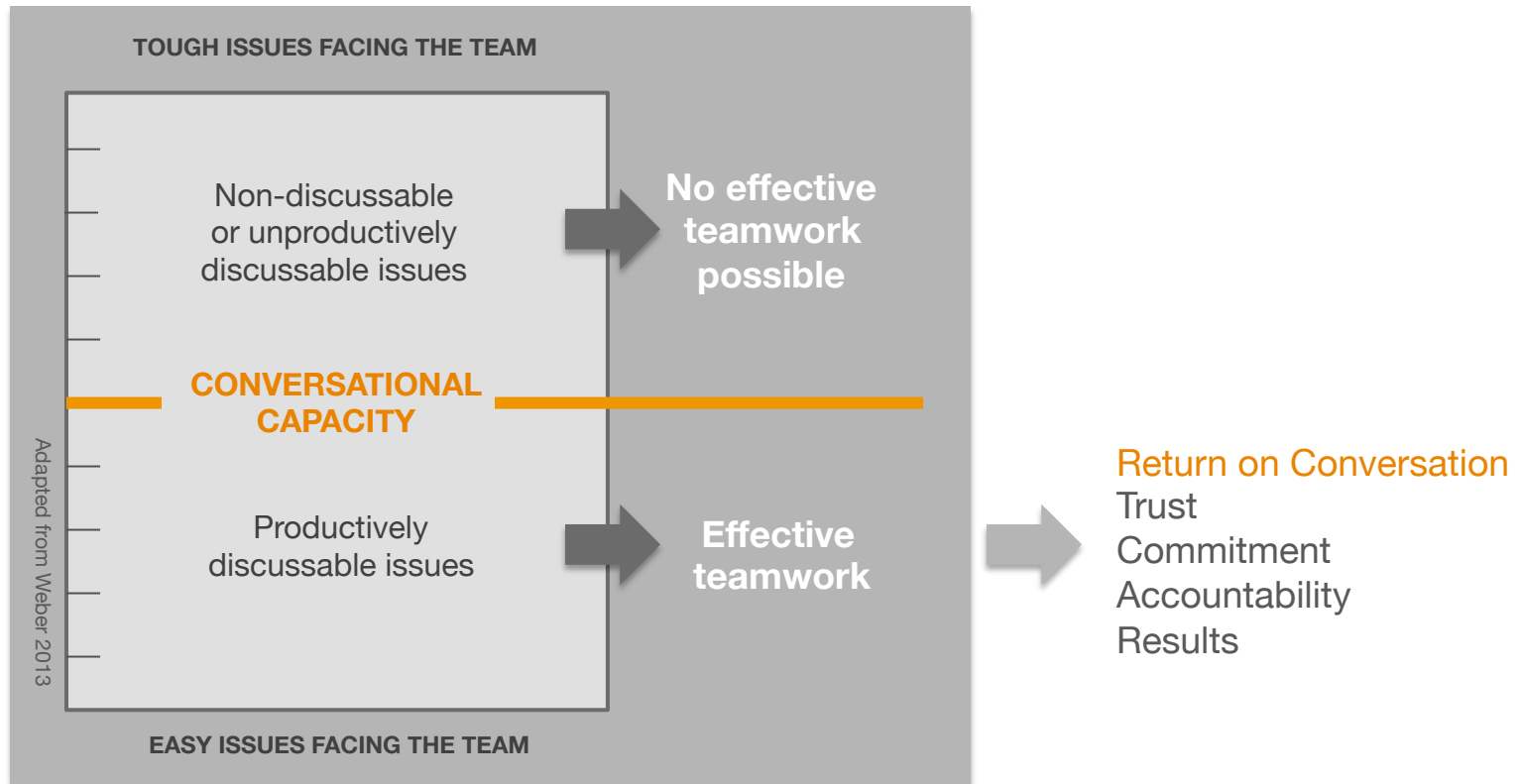
Ank Stuyfzand
www.syncatwork.com
ank@syncatwork.com
617.775.7552



Your vision, strategy, planning and expertise
are only as good as your ability
to have candid conversations about them ...

Conversational Capacity

The ability to have open, non-defensive and balanced dialogue about tough issues in difficult circumstances

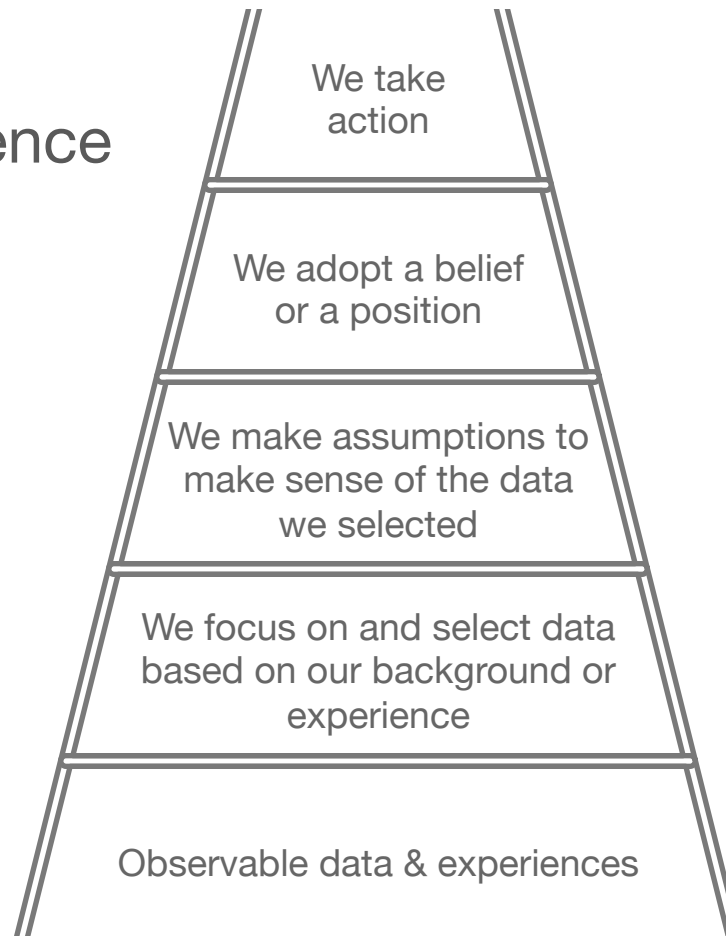


Our Mind at Work

According to research at Cambridge University, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem. This is because once we learn how to read we begin to arrange the letters in our mind **to see what we expect to see**. The human mind does not read every letter by itself, but perceives the word as a whole. We do this unconsciously without thought.

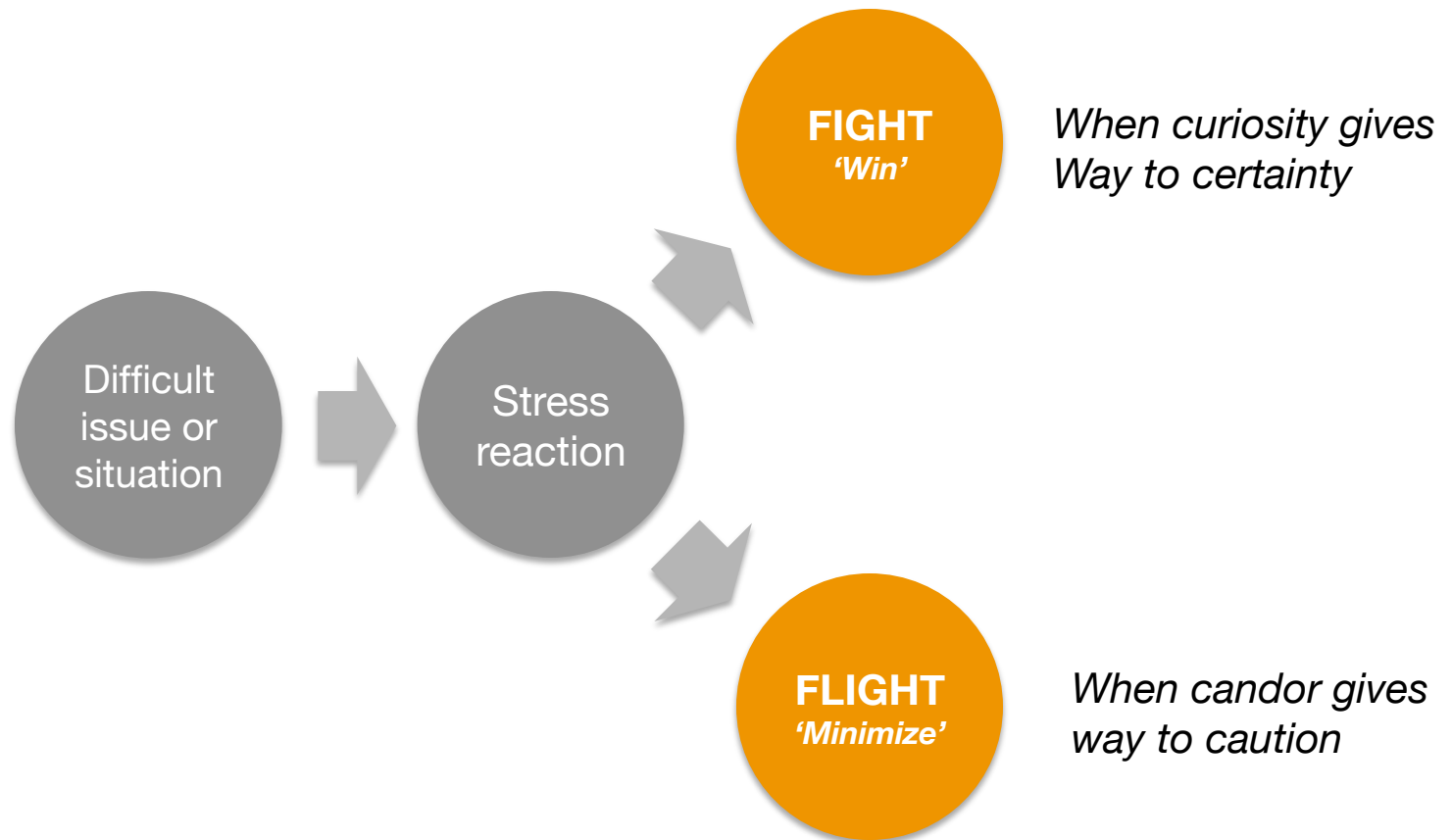
A Mind of Our Own

Ladder of inference



Instinctive Reactions

When our good intentions are overruled by our mindless behaviors ...

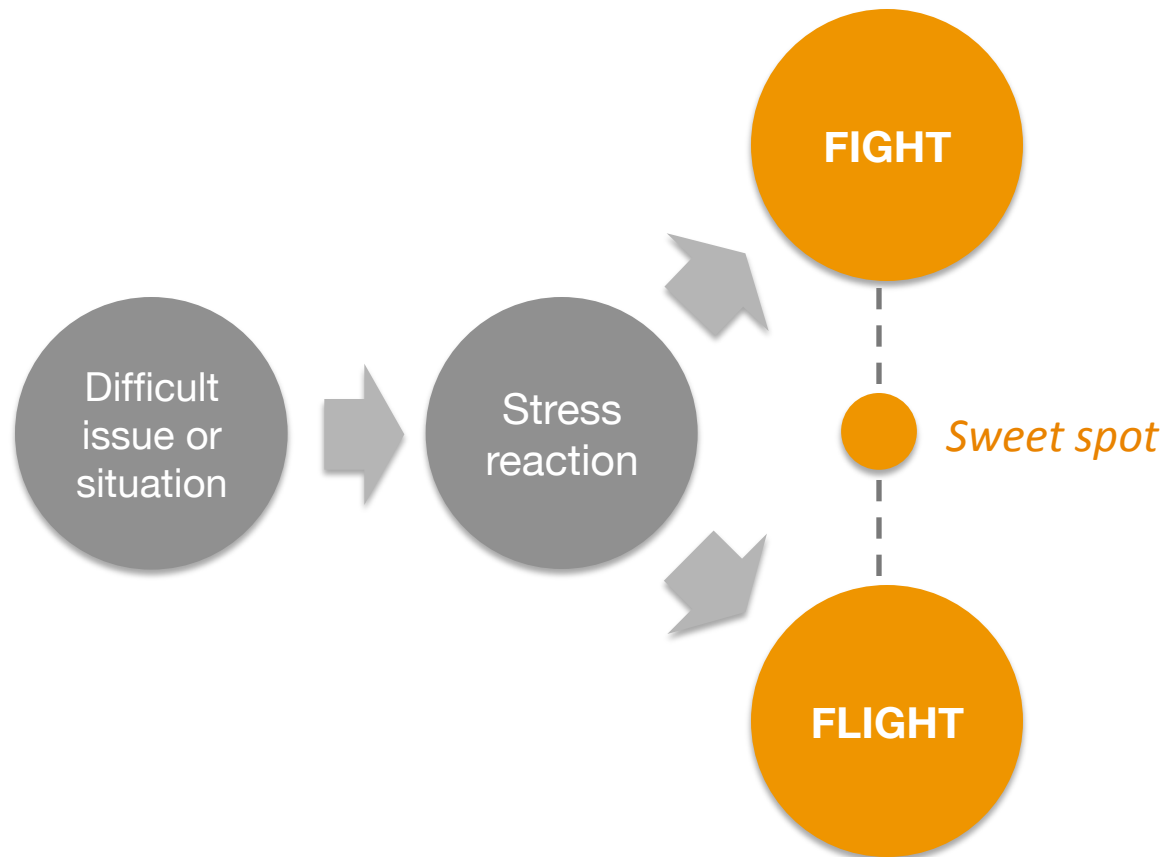


Win and Minimize Triggers

- How much we care about the issue
- Our formal position in the hierarchy
- Status
- Expertise
- The behavior of others
- Personality
- Culture
- The perceived risk of (not) speaking up

Instinctive Reactions

When our good intentions are overruled by our mindless behaviors ...



Conversational Sweet Spot

Fight ← ● → Flight

Win ← ● → Minimize

Candor ← ● → Curiosity

Sweet Spot Behaviors

Start with **Candor**

1. State your position *“Here is what I think...”*
2. Explain your thinking *“... and this is why I think that is.”*

Balance with **Curiosity**

3. Test your perspective *“What do you think of what I just said?”*
4. Ask for the perspective of others *“What is your perspective?”*

Staying in the Sweet Spot Day-to-Day

INDIVIDUAL

- Meeting time is practice time
- Reflect on your practice
- Seek support and feedback
- Set and manage expectations
- One skill at a time
- Be patient

TEAM

- Meeting time is practice time
- Jointly adapt, practice and implement the process
- Integrate in decision making process
- Appoint a monitor or facilitator
- Develop a conversational code of conduct
- Hold each other accountable



Our lives, careers and organizations fail
or succeed, one conversation at a time ...

David Whyte

