

Welcome to SMART Conversations®

“Taming the Elephant in the Room”



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Special Offer for MNN Conference Attendees

If you would like to learn more, we're offering a **\$50 discount** for an individual SMART Conversations® e-learning course or our 2-course bundle.

Promo code: MNN2018

Must sign up by Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2018 using the link below:
<https://smart-conversations.thinkific.com>

5 Principles of SMART Conversations®

- 1. Connecting precedes content**
- 2. Relationships are co-created**
- 3. Honor others through shared respect**
- 4. Value shared interest over self interest**
- 5. Seek synergy through shared understanding**

Managing Trigger Styles

Application

- My Trigger Style is...

- The situation that prompts it is...

- The assumption(s) I make is...

- A commitment I am willing to make in order to manage my Trigger Style is...

Certain situations tend to challenge our ability to stay in SMART Conversations®...

You will be sharing this next exercise with your table group.

What situations threaten your ability to stay in SMART Conversations®? Below are some possibilities:

- Passion for a particular topic or issue
- Feeling inferior to others
- Feeling superior to others
- Discord between people or within a group
- Being expected to have the answers
- Being new to the organization
- Fearing people's responses
- Other

Application

The situation that challenges my ability to stay in SMART Conversations® is: Respond on P 3.

Trigger Styles result from assumptions we make about ourselves and/or others...

Regarding your team, what assumptions do you make?

- People don't value my point of view.
- It's up to me to have the answers.
- Others have little to add that is of importance.
- I can't handle conflict.
- I don't have anything to contribute.
- What I say never makes a difference.
- I need to protect myself.
- I am never any good in difficult situations.
- I don't have time to get into a conversation.
- I'm always right in the end.
- They never take time to listen.
- I already know what he/she will say.
- If I say what I think, I'll only make things worse.
- Other _____

Application

The assumption I make is: Respond on P 3.

Principle 3 - What are Undiscussables & What Do They Cost?

Undiscussables are things you *think* and *feel* on the job or in your personal life but won't say. In a workplace situation, we are talking about things that are costing you money, both directly and indirectly. Our intent is to make you aware of the significant costs that Undiscussables represent.

We are not suggesting this as something that you must do or even need to do. The point of addressing Undiscussables is to empower you to make a choice about how you manage them when it is clear that the business cost outweighs being silent.

A company culture that feels safe and open enough to surface Undiscussables will have significantly more energy and time to focus on its priorities. It will also support the four core conditions of SMART Conversations® (dialogue): **Shared Meaning, Authenticity, Respect and Trust.**

Examples of Undiscussables

Hard costs

- You know that the materials you are using are below quality. Yet, you have a deadline hanging over your head. You choose to be silent about it.
- A team member is under performing. Everybody is aware of it, and you choose not to address it.
- Your project is over budget and/or behind schedule. Rather than deal with it, you remain silent.

People costs

- You have a problematic relationship with your client, yet you choose to ignore it.
- Regarding #2 above... everybody knows that the person is not meeting expectations, and you are losing credibility.
- A senior person in the organization is disrespectful to team members, causing low morale. Yet, everyone remains silent.

How to Decide when to Surface an Undiscussable at Work

Value and Importance

- Is the relationship valuable enough?
- Is the task important enough?

Frequency and Pain

- Is the crisis severe enough?
- Is the contact frequent enough?
- Is the discomfort intense enough?

Hard costs to the Business

Is the undiscussable...

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Negatively impacting productivity? | Putting your credibility at risk? | Risking a client relationship? |
| Putting the company's reputation at risk? | Creating a safety issue? | Creating budget overruns or delays? |

Surfacing Undiscussables – Examples of Tools

1. Asking for permission – checking readiness:

May I have your permission to bring up an issue I have been holding on to?

2. Conversation with positive intent:

I'd like to talk about what happened in last week's meeting. Can we go someplace for a cup of coffee?

3. Disclose difficult feeling – show vulnerability:

I'm a bit nervous about bringing this up... and...

4. Do/Don't Skill:

I'd like to get clarity on something that happened in last week's meeting. I don't want to sound blaming.

5. Ask an open-ended question:

*What was your intent for sharing the survey results in last week's meeting?
Where are you with the report?*

6. State an observation without blame:

Our agreement was that you would finish the report by last Monday.

Undiscussables worksheet

Prior to addressing an undiscussable, we suggest taking some time for pre-conversation planning. This worksheet provides a space for you to consider your thoughts and feelings before jumping into a high-stakes conversation.

1. Is my intention to improve the relationship? ___ Yes ___ No (If no, this is not the right timing)

2. What are the *assumptions* or *conclusions* I make when I interact with this person?

3. What triggers me about this person or the situation?

4. What is my part in this situation? What have I done or said to contribute to the bad feelings?

5. Draft a conversation opener (Select one of the options on page 6 in this handout packet)

6. How will I manage my Trigger Style? _____

Conversation reminders:

- Listen and ask questions at least two times more often than you speak
- Refuse to place blame
- Be respectful of yourself and the other person
- Seek a win-win outcome
- Use the SMART Conversations® agreements; see p. 9 of this packet

Undiscussables Exercise

Scenario #1 – Personal Situation

You are the parent of the bride to be. She and her finance have recently announced they are planning a destination wedding. Your brother forcefully told you he is against this idea as he feels it will exclude family members due to the expense. This is not your decision, and you do not want to interfere.

You feel blamed and disrespected by your brother and want to address it with him as soon as possible.

Scenario #2 – Professional Situation

One of your company teammates discusses their personal life openly and frequently, often including intimate details. You have smiled uneasily; tried to change the subject; and avoided eye contact; but she is not getting the hint.

You feel offended and uncomfortable and have decided to raise the issue with her.