

# Ministry of Education National Hui RTLB cluster managers

## The Hard Conversation

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# Whakatauki

Ma mua ke kite a muri  
Ma muri ka ora a mua

*Those who lead give sight to those who follow.  
Those who follow give life to those who lead.*



# Outcomes for the session

- Identify barriers to hard conversations
- Become familiar with the Abrams framework for hard conversations and apply it in a way which preserves the relationship and addresses the issue.
- Identify difficult personality types and strategies to deal with them



# The courageous conversation

Share with your colleagues, a situation when you needed to have a hard conversation.

How did you feel?

What was the outcome?



The challenge is to address the issues and preserve the relationship.





There are many people who think they want to be matadors, only to find themselves in the ring with 2,000 pounds of bull bearing down on them



and then discover that what they really wanted  
was to wear tight pants and hear the crowd roar.

Hard or courageous conversations are about being true to yourself, doing what is right for the organisation, teachers and children and shaping a supportive environment.

Ready, aim, fire

1. Get clear
2. Craft the conversation- plan
3. Communicate –script





“Get into trouble...  
necessary  
trouble.”

U.S. Congressman John  
Lewis



# Finding our voice around what matters

It is our collective responsibility

- To build cultures of excellence;
- To create a sense of urgency around our work

We all need help

- To become more aware / more empathic;
- To learn what our contribution is to a given problem and what we could do to be a part of a solution.



# Always Start with a Coaching Stance

- Coaching
- Questioning
- Curiosity

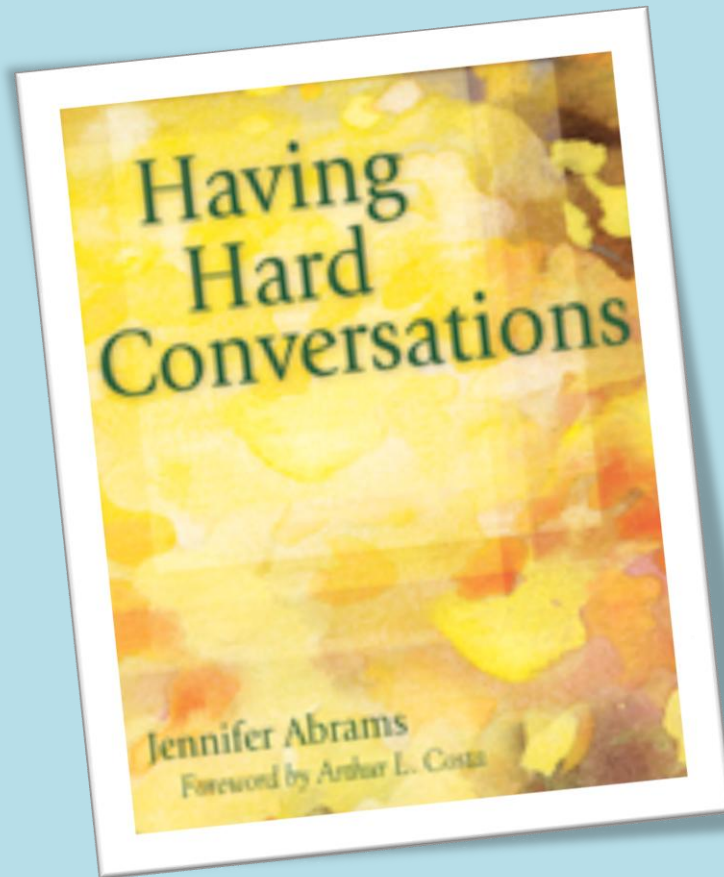


# But When It Doesn't Fit...

When the practice is....

- Educationally or professionally unsound for students or staff
- Physically unsafe for anyone
- Emotionally damaging to anyone

# You Might Need Another “Tool” in the Tool Kit



# Session Norms

- Inquiry and Learning
- Equitable Participation
- Self-Determination
- Confidentiality and Respect



# Think about a hard conversation you have not had with someone.

What are the circumstances surrounding the concern?

What is bothering you?

What are some of the reasons you have not said anything yet?



# Cards

In pairs match the reason for avoiding the conversation with *the words we say.*





# What Wins Out When We Don't Speak Up

- Pain and guilt
- The other person has the power
- We don't live by our principles
- Negative impact on everyone



# Questions to ask yourself before having the courageous conversation

1. Timing
2. Stakes
3. Likelihood of success
4. Options
5. Consequences of failure
6. Personal perspective
7. Do-ability
8. Identifying the real problem

From Meyerson, D. (2007). *Tempered Radicals as Institutional Change Agents*

Agents

# What's the Real Problem?

Almost all conflict is a result of violated expectations.

Blaine Lee



Identify a situation where you need to have a hard conversation?

Talk with your colleague

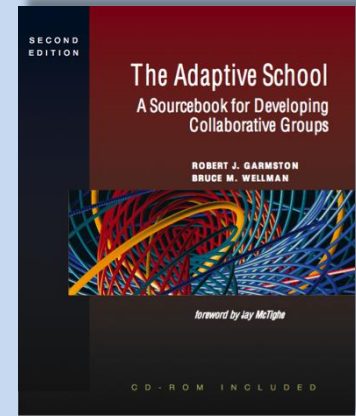
What are the violated expectations?



# Making a plan: developing an outcome map

Garmston & Wellman – Adaptive Schools

- What is the **presenting problem**?
- What is the **tentative outcome**?
- What are the **desired behaviours** I want to see and hear?
- What **knowledge, skills and attitudes** does this person need to act according to the desired outcome?
- What **strategies** can I use to promote this person's growth?
- What **resources** do I need to carry out these strategies successfully?



Let's look at some examples:

Example 1

Example 2

Work in pairs and fill in the missing section.

Now it's your turn:

Take a challenging situation which needs an 'opportunity' conversation and complete an outcome map.

Share with your partner.



# The script

1. Setting the **tone**
2. Naming the **issue**
3. Giving specific **examples**
4. Describing the **impact**
5. Indicate a wish to **dialogue**



# The scripting steps

Complete the steps for the situation you did the outcome map for.





# Preparing to have a productive conversation

- Location
- Body language
- Language
- Approach – age differentiated
- Emotional preparation
- Quiet for metacognition, crying, yelling
- Approaches match the person



# The conversation

Have a conversation with a partner. The third person will observe and feedback on the process the fourth person will film the conversation with the hard conversationalists device .

Discuss how the process went and the steps to an outcome.

Each have a turn.



Our conversations invent us.

Through our speech and our silence, we become smaller or larger selves.

Through our speech and our silence, we diminish or enhance the other person, and we narrow or expand the possibilities between us.

**A Final Thought**



How we use our voice  
determines the quality of our  
relationships, who we are in the  
world, and what that world can  
be and might become.

Clearly, a lot is at stake here.

Harriet Lerner, *The Dance of Connection*

A Final Thought



# Can you identify one of these?

- The underminers
- The contrarians
- The recruiters
- The challenged
- The on-the-job retirees
- The whiners and complainers

Choose one, read about them, share, report back.





I teach. I touch the future.

