

Office of University Life

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Office of University Life

Welcome to *In Session*

The University Life Professional Development Series

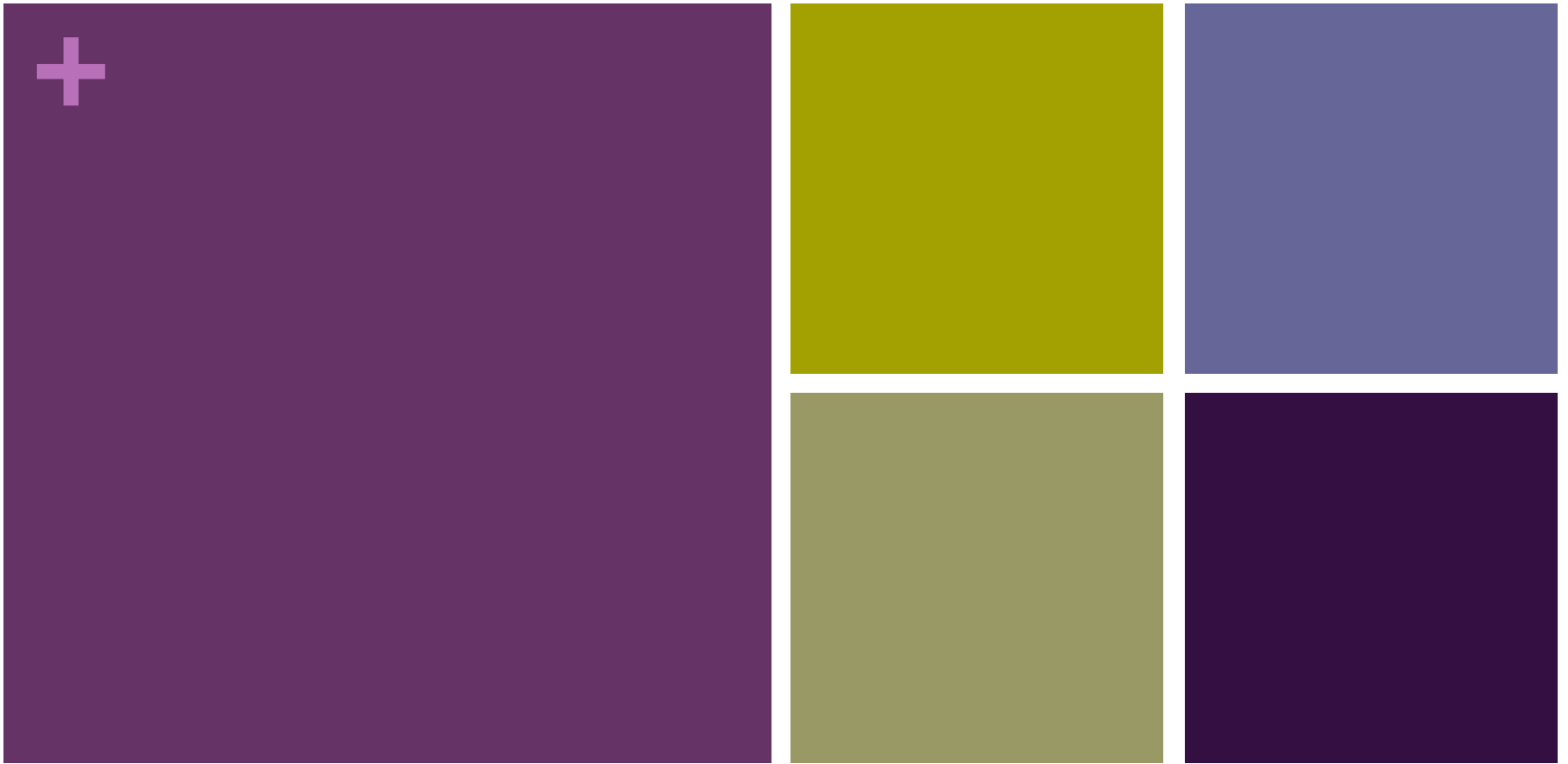
Preparing for Difficult Conversations

Panelists:

Aisha Holder, PhD

Jane Bogart, EdD, MCHES

Cary Bosak, LCSW-R



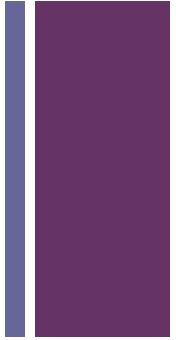
Preparing for Difficult Conversations

Aisha Holder, PhD

Psychologist, Counseling & Psychological Services



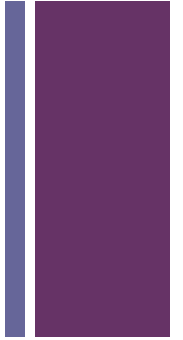
Preparing for Difficult Conversations



- High stakes and potential consequences
- Opposing viewpoints
- Uncertainty about how the conversation will unfold
- Cultural, historical and political factors
- Elicits strong emotions



Preparing for Difficult Conversations



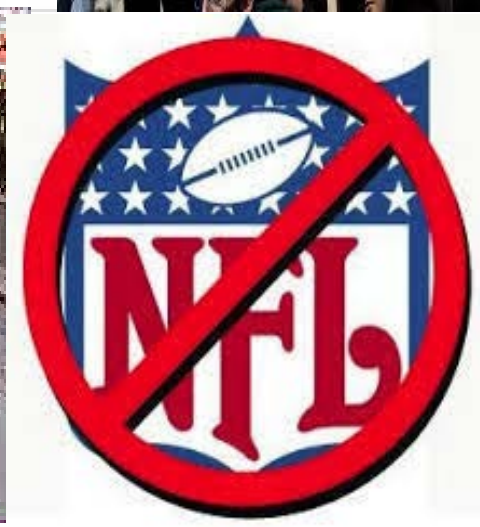
- Be clear about the issue
- Think about your objective
- Check the policies and procedures
- How-Where-When
- Vent
- Check your mindset



Team Response













Final Tips

1. Do your homework in advance. Get the facts of the difficult situation / student(s) and study them
2. Try to predict the questions/needs the other person may have and be prepared to respond. If possible have options available
3. Be a good listener. Make sure the other person feels they have been heard
4. Be candid. Let the other person know what you can and cannot do and be prepared to explain why
5. Be confident! Ask for what you need but offer compromise when appropriate
6. Don't make promises you can't keep and always follow-through with promises you make
7. Be aware of precedents. Are you following them or making them?
8. Be prepared to share what you believe is fair and equitable for the student/s and the community
9. Don't pass the buck, if you are able to fix it do it
10. Know how and when to end a conversation

BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD.

Speak with integrity.

Say only what you mean.

Avoid using the Word to speak against
yourself or to gossip about others.

Use the power of your Word
in the direction of truth and love.

- Don Miguel Ruiz

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DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY.

Nothing others do is because of you.

What others say and do is
a projection of their own reality,
their own dream.

When you are immune to
the opinions and actions of others,
you won't be the victim of
needless suffering.

- Don Miguel Ruiz

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THE FOUR AGREEMENTS

BY
Don Miguel Ruiz

Don't make ASSUMPTIONS.

Find the courage to ask questions
and to express what you really want.

Communicate with others as clearly
as you can to avoid misunderstandings,
sadness and drama.

With just this one agreement,
you can completely transform your life.

- Don Miguel Ruiz

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ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST.

Your best is going to change
from moment to moment;
it will be different when you are
healthy as opposed to sick.

Under any circumstance,
simply do your best,
and you will avoid self-judgment,
self-abuse, and regret.

- Don Miguel Ruiz

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Thank you

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Engaging with Challenging Students

Jane Bogart, EdD, MCHES

Director, CUMC Center for Student Wellness

Behavior is Communication

We play a key role in identifying and responding to students who may be in distress.

- Labeling the behavior versus the student

Misbehavior is a symptom

- What may be going on with a student?
- Sometimes, at that moment, everything is not okay.

Our own behavior

- How do you behave when you are distressed?
- How do your own biases/perceptions/beliefs impact your interaction with a student is presenting in a challenging way?
- How might this affect your advocating for the student?

What is “Challenging”?

May be different for different people

- What are yours?
- Your comfort level with expression?

Presentation/Emotion/Verbal Content

- Distraught
- Aggressive/Intimidating
- Insolent
- Angry
- Entitled

Cultural and Personal Considerations

- Viewed through whose lens?
- What’s acceptable?
- Gut instinct?

The Whole Student

University students experience higher levels of distress in comparison to general population (Staffman, 2010)

Students described as:

- Facing overwhelming demand
- Lacking coping skills
- Lacking distress tolerance
- Increasingly coming to campus with pre-existing mental health problems
- Connected-disconnected generation
- Product of helicopter parenting
- Globalization

Causes of Distress

- Interpersonal
- Physical and Emotional Health
- Environmental and Academic
- Events
- Socio-Political Climate

Traumatic or Very Difficult to Handle in the last 12 months (Self-report)

	CUMC	CU Grad
➡ Academics	35.4%	36.7%
➡ Career-related issue	32.9%	37.0%
Death of a family member or friend	12.0%	10.1%
Family problems	22.8%	20.9%
➡ Finances	23.8%	24.7%
Health problem of a family member or partner	18.6%	14.5%
➡ Intimate relationships	30.9%	28.8%
Other social relationships	16.8%	17.8%
Personal appearance	15.8%	15.8%
Personal health issue	16.9%	15.7%

Some Challenging Behaviors

Incivility: includes disrespect for standards of behavior such as offensive language and comments.

Intimidation: includes student use of threatening language, bullying, physical posturing, and anger.

Bullying: embarrassing, attacking, or humiliating a person

Entitlement: the belief that someone is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment

¹ Joy Peluchette, Katherine Karl, and Jerry Kopf. "Students Behaving Badly: Causes and Possible Strategies for Dealing with Classroom Incivility"

² Audrey Williams June. "When Students Become Class Bullies, Professors Are Among the Victims," *Chronicle of Higher Education*

How to Engage

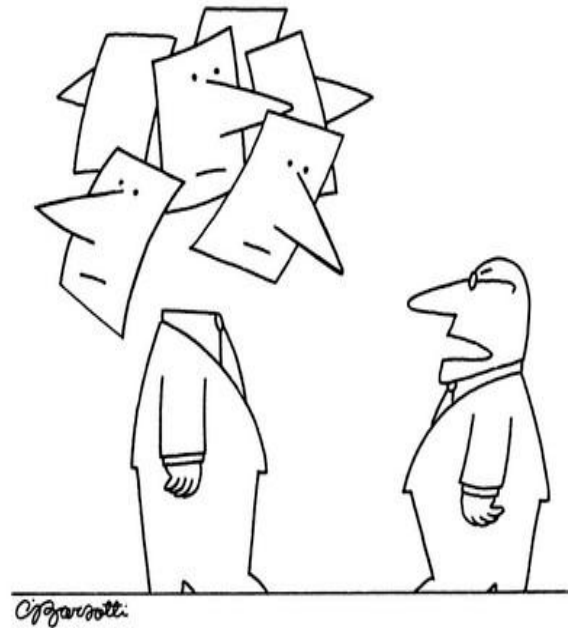
- Express empathy
- Listen thoughtfully and carefully
- Reframe
- Set boundaries
- Avoid argumentation
- Roll with resistance
- Provide Stewardship
- Seek support



Effective Listening 101

Cary Bosak, LCSW-R

Roadblocks to listening



"Are you listening to me?"

Roadblocks to listening

- **Being aware of your own issues** (your agenda, your time constraints, your own struggles/challenges, your emotional reaction to the dynamic/scenario)
 - Recognizing what is personal--- check yourself
 - Placing it aside to be present in the moment (focusing on what you are hearing, staying present in the room with the individual)

Empathy-is not truly understanding what the other is going through but sensing or imagining what the other is experiencing*

Roadblocks to listening

- **Thinking Ahead**

- Planning ahead in your mind of what to say next
- Staying present in the moment and hear
- Rephrasing what you hear in response, taking pause and then planning

Roadblocks to listening

- Solution Oriented/Derailing

- "Something similar happened to me...here is what I did..."

- "Have you thought about trying ?....."

Listen first then work towards redirecting with solution oriented referrals or ideas

What made the moment memorable?

– *Reflect for a moment on a difficult time or moment in your life.....*

» *Who did you speak to?*

» *What did they do that was helpful?*

Effective Listening 101:

-Non judgmental

-Uninterrupted listening

-Attentive

-Open body language

-Calm

-Sense of empathy

What did they do that was unhelpful?

What are your personal roadblocks?

- Derailing--- “Something similar happened to me and here is what I did.....”
- Problem solving ----” Have you tried.....?”
- Self Doubter ----”I don’t know what to do next?....”
- Discomfort with eye contact?



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