



During

THE CONVERSATION

TLC: TRUTHTELL, LISTEN, COMPLETE

This is where you get to put your skills and courage into action (and probably the entire reason you're reading this toolkit, to begin with). For the moments when you'd rather crawl under a rock or maybe even come out full force, try some TLC instead. Because not only is it effective—it's necessary!



OUTCOMES & OVERVIEW

This module will give you all the info you need to actually have a hard conversation. You'll put your courage and skills into action and learn all about the power of applying TLC—Truth-tell, Listen, and Complete—to a hard conversation. Because not only are these concepts effective—they're necessary!

CHECKLIST

- Read through the module PDF
- Listen to the audio that accompanies the PDF
- Complete the Empowered Takeaways, including: getting clear on the power of truth-telling; learning how to address your challenges with the tools in this module; honing your listening skills; identifying the requests you will make at the end of your conversation; and being clear on how you'd like both you and the other person to walk away from the conversation feeling

OUTCOMES

By the time you are finished with this module, you will have gained valuable skills for engaging in clear and compassionate dialogue in a way that de-escalates conflict and helps both you and the other person feel heard. You'll also learn how to connect from a place of vulnerability —while remaining anchored in your intention and your self-respect. This module offers you valuable skills to guide the hard conversation where it needs to go, even in moments when you feel flustered or unsure.

Truth-tell

Truth-telling is all about vulnerable and honest sharing. It's rarely clean or straightforward. There might be some difficult moments when we share our truth during a hard conversation. But it's not about trying to get it right. The point is, you want to connect with the other person: the parts of you both that are tender, and sometimes rough around the edges.


Additionally, truth-telling is about slowing down and checking in with yourself so you can connect with what is happening in real time. Sometimes, we tend to get super worked up when we're in a rush. But it can be powerful to check in with yourself and say, "Wow, I'm feeling kind of nervous right now! Can we just take a moment to pause here? How are you doing?"

It's good to know if you are the type of person who sometimes blows a fuse from too much stimulation or maybe even the fear of being called out. It's also OK to know what you want to say beforehand and to even script it out. At the same time, it's perfectly understandable if you feel confused when you are having the conversation. The best thing you can do is pause, go off script, and just get real about where you are right now. And remember to breathe!

Truth-telling is all about transparency, every step of the way. But what it's not about is vomiting out everything that's on your mind. It requires discernment. In order to figure out what you want to say, ask yourself: *What will actually move the conversation forward into a place of connection? What will help us to stay open-hearted and honest?*

TIP

Take a power pause and check in with your body. Sometimes, hard conversations can feel really heated or scary. In the middle of a tense moment, place your hand over your heart and admit to the other person how you feel. For example, "Is it OK if we slow down? I'm feeling kind of scattered." Check in with them and ask them how they feel. Notice how this eases any tension that might be present.



When you're truthtelling, you acknowledge that having a hard conversation is, well, hard—and that feelings of anger and defensiveness will come up for both of you. But instead of just treating those feelings like they're facts, you can use these moments as an opportunity to offer compassion. Remember, it's not about making someone else wrong—it's about honoring who *you* are and what you need.

When you are authentic, you are clear. You also demonstrate to others that we are trustworthy because truthtelling offers others the space to be exactly who they are.

But whether what you have to say is met by approval or blame, first and foremost, truthtelling allows you to take responsibility for how *you're* feeling. Again, it's not about how the other person reacts. Empower yourself to be responsible for your own emotions, and the experience *you* want to have throughout your hard conversation.



EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

How do you define truth-telling? How do you personally express your own truth?

What will truth-telling look like for you in this specific conversation you're about to have?

What are your challenges around having this conversation? For example, if you know that you tend to get super nervous and stumble over your words in high-intensity situations, this might be a good reminder to slow down.

Listen

OK, here's a challenge for you: Be committed to doing more listening than talking.

Before you protest, just think of all the times other people have talked over you and you haven't felt heard. And then, think about the times you've felt really listened to and heard. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes—seriously, this makes a huge difference when it comes to getting your truth out on the table. When you make room for another person to be heard, you create space for them to hear you. Then it becomes more of a two-way conversation about what's really going on, and you get to the core of who you are as human beings.

When we think we're right, we are resistant to hearing another person out, especially if this person tends to be hard to get through to. But truly listening means that we remain open to other perspectives...and possibly, to having our minds and hearts changed. When we are curious, we see the situation in a new way, and even admit that what we believed to be "true" isn't true. We learn whether or not we were making incorrect assumptions. We also get the chance to clear up any blocks to communication. This is seriously one of the coolest things about willingly venturing into the unknown!

This is the first level of listening: giving people the space to be heard.

Remember to remind yourself that there are always two sides to a story. Even if someone is being a total asshole, it's amazing to see what can happen when you are willing to take a deep breath and just say, "Wow, tell me more! How did that make you feel?" Let them know that you are genuinely interested about what's going on for them, and that you really, *really* want to get it. Everyone wants to know that they are important, and that their thoughts and feelings matter.

The second level is active listening.

Nine out of ten people are so busy forming a response and a defense that they totally forget this part. But active listening is about being utterly present to the other person. It's about listening to understand, not to respond. When you actively listen to someone, you're not inserting your agenda—you're just taking in what the other person is saying, and maybe you even reflect what you hear back to them, to the extent that you can truly hear what they are saying.

TIP

Slow down. Approach the conversation with a sense of calm, as well as the assurance that both of you feel safe. When it feels like you are rushing or that you are trying too hard to make your point, breathe deeply and slow down.

It's important to stop and reflect on what you are hearing, because it can be easy to misinterpret information when emotions are running high. Instead, take a breath and recognize that the other person might be going through their own issues. Have respect for them and tell them that you are doing your best to understand. For example, you might say something like, "It sounds like you are very angry right now. I'm hearing that you've been hurt by this situation. Is that right?" This acknowledges their feelings and validates what's going on for them.


Many of us are used to being talked over, argued with, or sometimes even ghosted when we express what's really going on for us in a charged situation. Imagine how seen and good they will feel when they realize you aren't trying to change what they're experiencing. You're just trying to understand and give them the opportunity to talk about it.

However, validating someone else's feelings isn't the same as letting yourself be attacked. You don't have to agree with them, but stating what you think they're experiencing, by using their own words, turns the tables back on them so that they can better express what they're feeling.

TIP

Stay in the conversation, even when it's hard. Think about at least one thing that makes you feel connected to this other person. For example, maybe you know that their family situation is tough, and you can relate to that. Or perhaps they have the same taste in music (yes, sometimes it can be as simple as that!). Be sure to carry that sense of connection into your conversation. Remember that connection, especially in moments when feelings are running hot and high.





Most people don't feel safe expressing how they feel. When people's sense of reality is threatened, this can sometimes come out as anger, defensiveness, judgment, or deflecting blame. Just remember that it isn't about you. It's really hard not to take someone else's feelings personally, especially if they're about you, but please understand that this person is having their own experience, just as you are having yours. Respect that by listening and reflecting back what you hear them say.

After you've offered the other person space to talk, be sure to chime in with your own two cents. *Do not just let them vent about their feelings.* If it seems like they are taking over the whole conversation or things are getting too intense for you, request that each of you slow down, and make sure that both of you have time to speak. For example, you could say, "Thanks for being so honest with me. Now, can I tell you what's going on for me?"

This type of communication isn't about trying to convince them of anything. It's about being assertive and allowing a natural give-and-take.

That means you have to be willing to give up the idea of "winners" and "losers." Sure, you might be judging the hell out of this other person, and that's fine. You're probably upset with them or experiencing some degree of conflict, right? If not, this wouldn't be a hard conversation. Accept that you're both going to have your own emotions. Stay open and give them room to respond. This is how hearts open and minds change. Try it for yourself and see.

TIP

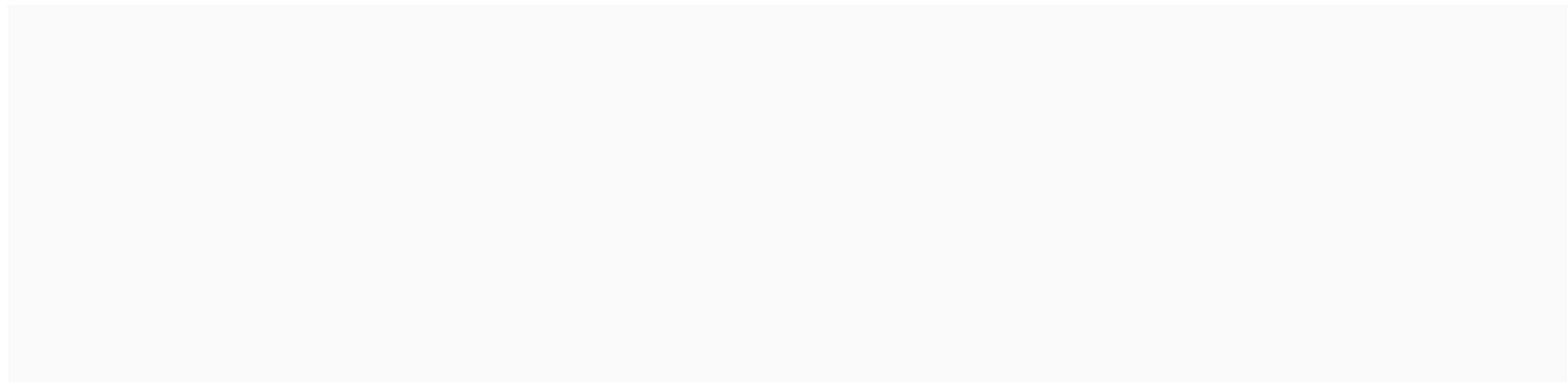
Listen actively. This means reflecting back to the other person what you heard, as well as asking them whether that's accurate or not. Ask them questions about what they heard you say, and how they are feeling.

EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

What kind of listener are you? If you are not sure, ask three people who are close to you to give you their feedback.



Have a conversation with someone you trust. Get curious about their experience and let them know that your intention is to be a better listener. Try the tips offered in this section. How did that go?




Complete

It's not always easy to know when to end a hard conversation. Sometimes, it'll be obvious. For example, one or both of you might just feel like it needs to end at a certain time. Maybe the other person will say they need time to think about what you've brought to the table—and so will you! In the worst-case scenario, the conversation could just end abruptly, with little sense of resolution. Whatever the case, remember that you have control over your role here, so try not to leave the conversation on a sour note.

Even if your hard conversation has felt awkward, you can ask the other person how they're doing. If it feels appropriate, let them know how you're doing. At the very least, you can appreciate that they were in this with you and acknowledge that it wasn't an easy conversation. As you empathize with them, come back to the original intention you set for yourself. Also, even though the whole point of having the conversation was to be honest, you can do that without shutting this person out of your heart—even when your judgments might be off the charts and part of you sees them as the asshole who did you wrong.

Honestly, it's totally possible that you'll need to have a series of hard conversations with another person before you figure it out. Remember, this is an art, not a science—meaning there are no easy formulas.





Sometimes, a hard conversation can be the end of a relationship, especially if it feels like two people just can't work through their issues together. But the way we deal with conflict says so much about how we deal with the world—because, let's face it, a lot of what we are going to come up against is conflict. Most people have a hard time navigating that conflict, but we all have a choice to move in a new direction.

Of course, if you have serious judgments about this other person, you might not want to talk to them at all, and that's OK. On their part, they might not want to see your face ever again by the time the conversation is over! Still, you have a choice here; you can plant the seeds for understanding, respect, and open communication.

That might be as simple as saying, "I know this wasn't easy, but I'm glad you were willing to talk it through with me."

No matter what each of your experiences were, let them know what you are taking away from the conversation. If there's room for it, encourage them to reflect on what they got out of it. And if the air feels clear, end the conversation by making a request (e.g., "I would love it if you asked my permission before bringing friends over when you come to my house. Are you OK with that?") and encourage them to ask for what they need. What is it both of you want? Is there a way for you to meet up in the middle?

TIP

Meet other people where they are. In the words of Wf1 Truthteller Gabby Bernstein, "The most loving thing we can do for someone is to accept them. The most unloving thing we can do is try to change them. When you try to change someone, you're effectively saying that you know what is best for them. Your unsolicited 'help' is a way of controlling and judging them. People may not show up the way you want them to, but when you accept them where they are, you can let go, forgive, and release."

Some of your hard conversations will go very easily, and others will be really hard. But even if the other person ends up attacking you or walking away, accept the reality of the situation. Be proud of yourself for "adulting" and just know that no matter what happens, the way other people choose to react is not about you, so long as you are doing your part to make it a win-win conversation.

EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

How would you like to end your conversation, whether or not you feel a sense of resolution?



What requests would you like to make of the other person that would make for a win-win situation? Write them down here and commit to asking for them when you complete your conversation.

