



Before the

CONVERSATION

THE THREE I'S: INQUIRY, INTENTION, INVITATION

The most important part of a hard conversation is preparing for it! The three I's will give you actionable advice so you're ready to have your hard conversations.



OUTCOMES & OVERVIEW

This module will guide you through the three steps you need to take to prepare for the hard conversation you need to have. You will learn about the importance of the three “I’s”: Inquiry, Intention, and Invitation. By preparing for the hard conversation and connecting with your deeper motivation for having one, you’ll be well on your way to smooth sailing!

CHECKLIST

- Read through the module PDF
- Listen to the audio that accompanies the PDF
- Complete the Empowered Takeaways, including: the conflict quiz; getting clear on your communication style, skills, and struggles; setting a powerful intention for a hard conversation you want to have; and making an invitation that puts you and the other person at ease

OUTCOMES

By the time you are finished with this module, you will have completed a thorough self-inquiry about why you need to have a hard conversation. You’ll set a powerful intention for yourself about the hard conversation you’ll soon be engaging in. You will also gain clarity on how to invite the other person into a win-win conversation in which both of your needs are addressed. Lastly, you’ll clarify your motives and feel calm, confident, and grounded well before your conversation.



Inquiry

Hard conversations signal to our brains a sense of “danger,” whether it is real or imagined. When we feel threatened, we move into fight or flight. This makes it difficult to get clear on who we are and what we want. But in order to have the hard conversations, we need to be willing to dig deeper and move into meaningful self-inquiry.

Inquiry is all about gaining clarity about who we are (including our strengths and challenges) and what drives us.

One of the first places we need to get clarity is in how we communicate with other people. Many women are hard-wired to make peace with others (even if it’s at their own expense), displaying passive behavior that essentially says, “You win, I lose.” Others go into defense mode and an “I win, you lose” mentality—ready to do battle and aggressively fight to the death for what they want. Then there are those uncomfortable stalemates where nobody’s having a conversation of any kind, but communication is always tense, uncomfortable, and passive-aggressive. In this case, both parties lose out on the opportunity to communicate honestly, and to learn how to move through the difficult spaces together.

TIP

Practice before the conversation. Stand in front of a mirror and imagine that you are talking to the person you need to have a hard conversation with. Without censoring yourself, say what you really wish you could say to them. Notice how that feels. Now, do it again, but this time, focus on speaking from your heart, which means taking responsibility for your feelings, and being transparent without blaming the other person. Notice the difference in how that feels.

When you move into a hard conversation, it's important to be assertive in your behavior and communication.

When we talk about things that are difficult, and confront attitudes within ourselves and each other that we don't want to look at, it's vital that we practice assertive communication by maintaining a sense of openness and curiosity that honors both us and the person we need to talk to.

Consider your default mode of communicating. Are you more passive (“I lose, you win”), more aggressive (“I win, you lose”), passive-aggressive (“We both lose because of lack of communication,”), or assertive (“We both win”)?

Does this tend to change depending on who you're interacting with?

Don't judge yourself. Our communication styles are complex and usually come from early conditioning and modeling from the adults in our lives. Getting clear about how you tend to communicate can be a great way to figure out which skills you already have, and which ones you want to develop.

TIP

Get out any pent-up anger before the conversation. Dissipate any tension that might be there by working out, screaming into a pillow, or writing your resentments down on a piece of paper and then tearing it up.



EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

What's your default style of communicating in times of conflict? If you don't know, **TAKE THIS QUIZ.**



What skills do you have that will help you in a hard conversation (i.e. patience, empathy, directness, the ability to gain people's trust easily, clarity in how you communicate, etc.)?



EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY (CONTINUED)

What do you struggle with when it comes to having a hard conversation (i.e. too impatient, quick temper, shaky nerves, tend to take care of others to your own detriment, etc.)?



Intention

Now that you've taken time for self-inquiry, you're ready to set a clear intention for your hard conversation.


The best intention you can set for a hard conversation is to be real, speak the truth, express vulnerability, be courageous, and connect with yourself and others. Doesn't that sound easy? NOT! ;)

No matter what, your intention should be about honoring yourself rather than trying to achieve a specific outcome. So, what exactly does that mean? When we are trying to get someone to behave according to what we want, we end up pushing our own agenda and not connecting with them authentically. We don't allow ourselves to make space for whatever needs to happen. That's when we encounter anger, resistance, and zero solution in sight.

When it comes down to it, there's no such thing as a *good* or *bad* intention. There are simply effective and not-so-effective intentions. I promise you that if you make intention-setting about getting something out of someone else (e.g., "I want them to apologize for being so rude to me") rather than honoring and staying connected to yourself (e.g., "I want to be compassionate to myself, especially when I am in fear or doubt), you will be disappointed. That's because, at the end of the day, there's only one person whose actions and reactions you have any control over: YOU.

TIP

Get real about your relationship with the other person. Before you talk to them, write down any past shit you have with them that might make it hard for you to really hear them out. Commit to staying open to this person, no matter what.



So let's think about setting our intentions from a different angle. What are you intending to get out of the hard conversation? What is something that you want for yourself, no matter how the other person reacts? For example, do you wish to be a better communicator? Do you want to improve your self-esteem? Or, do you simply want to stand up for yourself?

When we reflect on what we want, we allow ourselves to take responsibility, and we remain connected to our integrity and our power.

Sure, we might want the other person to react in a certain way, which is totally normal. After all, we're only human. When we're having a hard conversation, our first instinct is to get our point across and be heard, or to convince someone else of why they're wrong and should see things from our viewpoint. But we can't count on getting our way. In fact, I think it's really important to not have expectations walking into this conversation.

We must return to the intention we set and remain true to the one person that matters the most in this interaction—ourselves.

TIP

Get clear about your agendas. Write down any agendas you might have about the conversation (“I want her to be nicer to me and to admit it when she’s wrong.” “I want him to see things my way.”) Set your intent to release those agendas and commit to staying present.



EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

Why are you having this conversation, to begin with? Write down all your reasons. Be honest with yourself.



What are you hoping to get out of the conversation?



EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY (CONTINUED)

What is an intention you are setting for the conversation, for *yourself*, that you are committed to honoring, regardless of whether or not you get your desired outcome?





Invitation

Now that you are clear about your communication and you've set a powerful intention for it, you're ready to have a hard conversation.

Telling someone that you want to sit down and have a serious talk with them is never fun—neither for you nor for the other person. That's why it's crucial to turn this into an invitation. Think about it. When we receive personal invitations to events that are meaningful to the person inviting us, we feel special, cared for, and connected to them.

So how exactly do you invite another person into a hard conversation? Don't surprise them. Let them know you'd like to talk. Don't go into details; just make it known that this conversation will offer you both uninterrupted time to discuss what's on your minds. Give them time to respond to your invitation.

Be sure to make it not just about you, or them, but about your relationship itself.

Instead of speaking generally, "I need to talk to you about some things," reach out to them, briefly mention the situation you want to discuss, and say something like, "I'd love to tell you what's going on for me, and then it would be awesome to hear from you, so I know what you're feeling and thinking." But remember to customize it to your voice and the situation at hand.

Additionally, a hard conversation requires consent from both parties involved. Remember, they have the option to say no. If this is the case, you can still make it clear that you are willing to do what you can to make sure they are safe and that their needs are accommodated.

TIP

Before the conversation, negotiate with the other person to make sure both your needs are met. Set some ground rules that will help you both feel safe. Most people aren't going to walk into a conversation thinking about their safety, so be sure you bring it up first. Let them know you are committed to both of you feeling heard and respected.

When you send the invitation empathize with how they feel.

Be open to hearing what their terms are. Let go of agendas. Schedule the conversation on their time, if necessary. Be very conscious that their comfort zone might be a lot smaller than yours, so approach them with compassion.

On the flip side, if you are the person who is agreeing to have a hard conversation that someone else is initiating, be clear on whether or not you are ready to have that talk. If you are, make your needs known—and also, while it might feel scary, respond to the other person's invitation with graciousness and openness.

Now, let's discuss location. While meeting in person is preferable, chances are you won't always be able to have your hard conversations face to face. If that is the case, try for phone or Skype. Communication can get lost in translation over text, making it easy to misinterpret what is being said.

Whatever you do, invite the person to the conversation to create the opportunity to deeply connect and transform together.

EMPOWERED TAKEAWAY

How can you make your invitation as inviting as possible? Write your invitation in the space below. Send it to a friend and ask for honest feedback.

Make a commitment to when you will send the other person your invitation. After you make the invitation, write down what occurred in the space below. If the person said no, write about your feelings and reflect on where you'd like to go from here.