



April 6, 2023

Perhaps you're a little like Mary J. Blige: you want to be free from all the pain... that comes with having difficult conversations at work.

And perhaps as well, you're a little like me: a life-long people pleaser who prefers to avoid difficult conversations, hoping whatever issue is at hand will resolve itself.

Difficult conversations take many different forms in the workplace.

😬 Maybe you are running behind on a deadline and afraid to tell your client or your boss.

😓 Perhaps you have to give a performance review that is less than stellar.

😬 Could be that you disagree with a peer on how a project should move forward, but simply don't want to rock the boat.

Whatever the case may be, for a long time, when I was faced with the prospect of having to start a dialogue that felt icky, I did everything I could to steer clear.

And what I came to learn over time was, if I avoided addressing specific issues, nothing would change.

A client I work with used to feel quite similarly - she's an emerging leader who deeply cares about her team, her work, and her stellar reputation. When we first started working together, she was avoiding difficult conversations because she didn't want anyone to feel negatively toward her.

This led to numerous things getting stepped on - her calendar, her boundaries, and most importantly, her value of speaking up for what's right.

Fast forward just a few months, and she is becoming the QUEEN 👑 of handling what could be sticky situations and minimizing DRAMA.

How has she made such a quick progression? Together, we've worked on the following:

1) Mindset. Instead of going in with the belief the conversation will be difficult, she has learned that a key ingredient of these types of discussions is understanding the impact and result.

💡 Example: When giving feedback to her direct report recently, as opposed to “negative” feedback, she framed it as “developmental,” and even told her DR that her goal in giving the feedback is to open up a conversation and to help him grow and thrive.

2) Boundaries. Instead of allowing colleagues to make decisions on deadlines that are simply not realistic and bending over backwards to fit those timelines, she has found her voice to not only protect her time, but to produce the best possible work.

💡 Example: Recently, a high profile project arose and a colleague who was reliant on work from my client imposed a deadline of 3 days without context. Before we started working together, my client's MO would have been to work all hours of the night to achieve this unrealistic goal. Instead, in this instance, she went to the colleague, explained what was needed from her department to achieve the goal, and asked questions about the deadline. In the end, it turned out the colleague just thought it would be nice to have it done before the weekend. Together, they were able to extend it AND offer up some peace of mind.

3) Flexibility. Instead of being rigid in what she wants to get out of the conversation, she has learned that her perspective is just one of the perspectives involved in each situation. Now, she goes into these talks with a goal of understanding what the other person is thinking.

💡 Example: Prior to our work together, my client often scripted out what she wanted to say before a conversation she was dreading. And time and again, the conversation NEVER went to plan. Now, while she may take notes before talking it out, she's realized that being loose has not only helped make it easier, but it's humanized her more than ever before. She can now state what she believes to be the issue by talking succinctly about the situation, impact and result, and she also is able to say "This is my perspective. I'd love to hear yours as well." This open dialogue not only helps each party look for overlap between the points of view, it makes problem solving a whole lot easier.

The next time you are feeling like you'd rather avoid a difficult conversation, ask yourself:

What happens if I don't address this?

What are the possibilities if I do?

And just like Mary J., you could be belting out "No More Drama" with a new perspective... and a weight off your shoulders!

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I have just a few 1:1 coaching spots open this month. If you are interested in learning more, you can [book a free intro call here!](#) ➡ 📱

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