In this session...

- Review some of the common causes of conflict (5 minutes)
- Briefly review a framework and some tips for improving difficult conversations (10 minutes)
- Practice having difficult conversation in small groups (multiple rounds) (30 minutes)
- Group debrief / discussion (5 minutes)
Why do we end up like this? What are some of the common causes?
A model for difficult conversations – VOMP

(This is what you are trying to do... not necessarily how you do it)

• **Ventilate** – allow each party to express their issue.
  • Ask open ended questions. Seek to get the other person speaking first.
  • Use active listening including paraphrasing to ensure you understand their viewpoint. This does not mean agreement, just understanding.

• **Ownership** – take ownership of the impact on the other person.
  • There is always something you could have done better to avoid a conflict. ‘I see how that when I did ‘x’ it could have contributed to situation Y and you feeling Z’ – we are not always our best selves!

• **Empathize** – understand all points of view and feelings

• **Plan** – agree on a way to do things differently to solve the conflict
  • Must be clear and actionable with timelines
Tips and Traps...

• Assume good intent – sometimes this can be hard to do, especially when emotional.

• You can’t move on to solving a problem until you have really identified the core issue! Take your time.

• Finding common ground can help ease into a conversation and/or solutions.

• Be aware of and manage your emotions. You can share them/inquire! ‘How do you feel like today is running?’ ‘When X happened, it made me feel Y’ You can’t argue with how someone else feels.

• You can usually pick the venue, time, etc. for the conversation to minimize risk; You cannot engage the logical brain / higher thinking when the reptilian brain is in control!

• Engage early – missing interventions early can signify acceptance or approval

• Consider using these powerful questions:
  • “What do you think?” (general interpretation)
  • “What leads you to think what you think?” (facts and reasoning)
  • “What would you like to accomplish?” (goal)
  • “What is the most important thing to you?” (concern)
  • “What do you suggest we do?” (proposal for concrete actions)
How can you help de-escalate a disagreement?

• Be empathetic
• Respect personal space
• Use non-threatening body language
• Be professional, Stay Calm
• Focus on feelings not just facts
• Set limits: if they are belligerent or aggressive, set clear limits and consequences
• Choose wisely:
  • Accommodate if possible / appropriate
  • If impacting others, ask them to change their behavior
• Allow for time and silence. Count to ten in your head.
Our role play scenarios

In groups of 3:
• One person observes and provides feedback (no role card needed)
  • Use of VOMP – do they uncover the real problem?
  • Communication skills: voice and body language
  • What might they try differently next time?
• One initiates (‘Leader Card’)
• One reacts (‘Participant Card’)

Get into your character! Make it real!

Notes:
- Participants ask the leader how challenging a scenario they would like
- You may not have time to get to a resolution!

Timeline (~10 minutes per scenario)
• Read your scenario card (1 minute)
• Simulate the conversation (5 minutes)
• Observer provide feedback (2 minutes)
• Other feedback (1 minute)
  Rotate roles / repeat
Group Debrief

• What did you observe that worked?
• Where did you struggle?
• Any tips to share for others?