

Lesson 3: Managing Uncertainty and Conversational Recovery

The principle: Reduce uncertainty and protect the underlying relationship.

The communication behaviors: Uncertainty reduction; conversational recovery

Why the behaviors matter: Uncertainty doesn't bring out the best in people, and virtually all conversational and relational damage happens when conversations escalate. Reduce uncertainty and stop escalation and you'll dramatically reduce conversational damage.

The behaviors:

Managing Uncertainty: Use 3 Cs

- **Clarify**
When you know, fill the hole. When you don't, say they won't be in it alone
Filling hole most important part; use repetition & visual reinforcement if possible
- **Calm**
Clarify should calm the present; two tips help calm the future:
Tip 1: Tell them how they can get details faster going forward
Tip 2: Praise their questions & encourage more Qs
- **Conclude**
Review what's known; make something concrete
Ask clearinghouse Qs
Remind that many answers are only a question away

Conversational Recovery: Use Dr. E, PAAA, & matching

- **Call Dr. E** to contain escalating conversations
De-escalate: Use PAAA (see below) when a conversation heats up
Redirect: Get back to the main point, when there is one
Exit: Escalated conversations have a tendency to reheat, so don't overstay them
- **Use PAAA** to de-escalate heated conversations
PA: Praise and/or Admit
AA: Apologize + Acknowledge
AA Template: I'm sorry about [apology]. I didn't mean to [acknowledgment].
I'm sorry about the wait. I didn't mean to waste your time.
I'm sorry about upsetting you. I didn't mean to get you agitated.
- **Use conversational matching** to recover from heated conversations
Use matching as a tool, not a weapon
Never be the second idiot

Implementing the behaviors:

- Use the ideas from this lesson to reduce uncertainty and recover from an escalated conversation. Record what happens on this lesson's reflection sheet.
- Stretch goal: Contain & recover a conversation while you are frustrated or upset.

For more information:

Read p. 64–72; 121–123; & 143–146 of *Stop Talking, Start Communicating*.