



COLLEGE of AMERICAN
PATHOLOGISTS

Have Difficult Conversations Without Being Difficult)

Moderator: Nicole D. Riddle MD, FCAP

Subject Matter Experts:

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September 10, 2019
1:00 PM CDT

Agenda

- Objectives
- Overview and Summary
- Group Discussion
- Wrap Up: Conclusion & Next Steps

Disclaimer

Nothing in this discussion should be construed as legal, billing or accounting advice. Such advice should only come from your legal and financial professionals.

Presenters



Karim Sirgi, MD



Tricia Hughey

Overview

- Difficult conversations are unavoidable and necessary in a leadership role.
- Identify your primary purpose in having the conversation and pre-define an ideal outcome for the situation, and some steps along the way to get there.
- Difficult conversations are two-way processes: Commit to listen, query and acknowledge.
- Direct (and redirect) emotional energy from all parties toward a useful purpose.

Difficult Conversations in Healthcare - Different Issues for Different Audiences

Potential Audiences	Potential Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-on-one/Two or more• Subordinate/Superior• Peer/colleague• Hospital administrator(s)• Medical staff• Vendors• Patients (and their family)• Legislators and regulators• Professional organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior/Discipline• Impairment• Sexual Harassment• Competency/Peer Review• Fraud and Abuse• Feedback to patient or family member

Planning

- Plan how to open the conversation
- Know which “hat” you are wearing during that conversation
- Anticipate why the conversation has the potential to be difficult:
 - Sensitive Topic
 - People involved
 - Prior History
 - Environment
- Decide upfront where to have the Difficult Conversation and who needs to attend it

The Conversation

- Announce which "hat you're wearing" (always remember whose voice and constituency you are representing on that occasion)
- Set the tone with your opening statement and, when appropriate, state upfront the desired outcome
- Stick to facts and established policies
- This is a two-way dialogue, not a monologue
- End the conversation (again) with repeating the desired outcome for satisfactory resolution of the matter at hand, and get acknowledgement from the other party

When Speaking

- Be personable, not personal
- Be respectful
- Use fact(s), not prejudice – accuracy matters!
- Build up, do not destroy
- Mentor, do not lecture
- Use the clout of “what if” when proposing an alternative
- When answering a question
 - Pause and take a breath
 - Repeat the question
 - Give a reason for your response

How to Listen

- Maintain eye to eye contact
- Acknowledge comments, but don't ask "Why"?
- Don't interrupt when others are speaking
- Clarify pronouns to assure your understanding: they, him, we, etc.
- Ignore outbursts and threats
- Harness the power of silence when indicated

General Considerations

- Moral attributes of an effective leader DO COUNT in such a situation
- Mental toll of a difficult conversation:
 - On the leader
 - On the other party in the room
- Legal aspects of difficult conversations (discrimination, impact on current and future employment, fairness and hearing rules if disciplinary action is involved, Impairment issues, Burnout, etc ...).
- Nobody is perfect at it – Practice makes you better!
- Keep in mind that a Difficult Conversation may be plural: It is often not a one-time deal with the same party especially if additional parties need to get involved

Landmines

- Not allowing others to participate in the conversation as soon as possible
- Not asking insightful questions - don't appear uninformed
- Not entering conversations with thoughtful notes and acceptable options
- Not taking necessary time before reacting to unanticipated proposals
- Not concluding with agreed upon next steps
 - Each party should have assigned action(s) and timeline(s)
- Not asking for what you need
 - “Many things are lost for want of asking” – George Herbert
- Not stopping selling even after you have agreement
- Being really good at navigating difficult conversation
 - You may be asked to lead them again. And again.

Summary

- Difficult conversations are necessary and unavoidable in any well-run business
- Objectives of the conversation need to be well-delineated upfront
- Ideal outcome of the conversation is a win-win for parties involved (not a “victory” for one side over the other)
- More than one conversation is often needed – Keep at it until the desired outcome is obtained – Do not get discouraged if positive outcomes are not obtained at round 1 of the process; it is often a marathon, not a sprint
- Practice makes you better – Nobody truly likes it ... and nobody is perfect at it

References

- [Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most](#)
by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen
- [Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict](#)
by Judy Ringer
- [The Magic of Conflict](#)
by Thomas F. Crum
- [The Medical Staff Leader's Practical Guide](#)
by William Cors, MD
- [Leading Physicians Through Change](#)
by Jack Silversin and Mary Jane Kornacki

Conclusion and Next Steps

- Please provide feedback on our survey
 - What other topics are of interest?
 - Would you be interested in being a moderator or subject matter expert?

If so, contact Jackie Glanton at jglanto@cap.org

- Follow-up email after this roundtable to the entire community that will include links to related resources, content, and this recording

Practice Management Community of Practice

Next Session

SAVE THE DATE: December 12, 2019, 11:00 AM (CDT)

Topic: Financial Refresher

Practice Management Programs

- Practice Management Workshop –
[Click here to register](#) or
contact Jackie Glanton at jglanto@cap.org
- 10-Hour Practice Assessments –
Contact Anthony Battistone at abattis@cap.org



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