

# MANAGING CONFLICT: COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

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We sometimes have to have conversations which for a variety of reasons we could describe as “difficult”. This goes with the territory of working with others. For many people though, they find themselves in the moment not saying what they really wanted to say or indeed saying too much!

Moving from the zone of the comfortable debate to the zone of the uncomfortable debate takes courage. It takes some courage too to stay with the discomfort long enough to say what needs to be said in a way which is honouring and has impact. The reality for many of us though, is that we leave such moments with a sense of a gap between what we wanted to say and what was said in reality.

The following therefore is a practical way of getting into these conversations with the aim of moving to true dialogue. The process works on the principle of using fewer words, for more impact. It is recommended that this be only used when really required, hence the courageous conversations title.

## The process of the 3 “E”s

### Explain the gap

This is the critical phase where we clearly explain the issue and get on the table what we need to talk through

### Explore the gap

This phase of the conversation will be based around considerable questioning and listening from both people. There may well be a qualitative shift here from discussion to real dialogue

### Eliminate the gap

This is where we reach a clear and tested consensus about how we intend to move forward

Of the above 3 phases the one that is probably the most difficult is where we “explain the gap” ....that is, tabling the issue. To help in this, the following are a sequential set of statements that can help. It is recommended that these statements be completed using no more than 8 words. This will bring focus and power

### Explain the gap statements

- The issue is....
- An example is....
- What I feel is.....
- What is at stake is.....
- My contribution is.....
- I want to resolve this with you.....
- What do you think and feel....

In essence, the statements should be hard on the issue and soft on the person. The person is not the behaviour.

### Explore the gap approach using the “SAINT” acronym

	Me	The client
Situation (facts, perceptions)	How I see the situation	How do you see the situation?
Ambition	Let me tell you what I want	What do you want?
Impediment	What’s getting in the way?	What’s getting in the way?
“(k) nock on effect”	Implications from your perspective	What do you see happening?
Test	Let’s try this	How do you think we can resolve this?

*Then use the Action plan to eliminate the gap.....*