

## **Resources from Constructive Conversations in Difficult Conversations**

First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem

April 2020 with Mary Lou Hatcher (mlhatcher55@hotmail.com)

### **Conflict Resolution Texts: Books by William Ury**

Getting to Yes, Getting Past No, and The Power of a Positive No

Also: Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most by Stone, Patton and Keen

### **Resources for the Inward Journey:**

Prayers repeated often, to build our intention, our request, such as:

I will kindle my fire this evening  
In the presence of the holy angels of heaven,  
God, kindle thou in my heart within  
A flame of love to my neighbor.  
To my foe, to my friends, to my kindred all.  
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall...  
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy  
Without fear, without terror of anyone under the sun

*Prayer of a Hebridean woman, Celtic Reading, Every Earthly Blessing, Esthre de Waal*

Prayers that engage the body-- breathing, walking, yoga – such as this breath prayer offered by Thich Nhat Hanh (Resource text: The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh)

Breathing in, I am Calm

Breathing out, I Smile

Prayers or poems that support engagement with our Inner Enemies. Accept the invitation to read slowly, noticing what words or phrases stand out to you, speak to you. Linger there. Such as:

**The Guest House** *Rumi*

This being human is a Guest House  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows  
Who violently sweep your house  
Empty of its furniture,  
Still treat each guest honorably  
He may be clearing you out  
For some new delight.

Meet them at the door laughing  
And invite them in

Be grateful for whoever comes  
Because each has been sent  
As a guide from beyond.

Or, rewriting the Breath Prayer above:

Breathing in, I am \_\_\_\_\_ (raging, grieving)  
(*name an difficult emotion that rises for you with some regularity*)  
Breathing out, I am Merciful / Kind

Some Queries from the story of Jonah --

In what ways might you have ***within yourself*** both the voice of God AND the voice of Jonah?  
How do you hold yourself with compassion even when you've badly?  
In what ways can you imagine welcoming your own fears?  
In what ways can you imagine welcoming your own anger and loathing?  
Who has companioned you in the brutal hot desert heat?

**Pray for and nurture yourself with R.A.I.N.**

Recognize – Name your feelings  
Allow – Welcome your feelings  
Investigate – Be curious; how might this feeling be trying to protect you  
Nurture – Give your feelings time and attention

## Resources for the Outward Journey

### Interests and Positions

A parent and teenage child are in a disagreement about the teen attending a party –

Mom says, “You may NOT go, we are sheltering in place”

Child says, “I am GOING, I cannot stand not seeing my friends, I will be careful”

Both have declared a position: not going and going.

Possible interests, needs and values behind the Mom’s position:

(safety, control – some of her feelings: vulnerable, disrespected, exhausted, afraid)

Possible interests behind the Teen’s position?

(belonging, connection -- feelings: lonely, invulnerable, frustration, afraid)

When adversaries can speak about their interest it is more likely that alternative solutions may arise that meet both party’s needs.

People may have the SAME positions for very different interests and values:

For example: The US should get out of Afghanistan because it costs too much money.

The US should get out of Afghanistan because it claims too many innocent lives.

People on the same side of an issue can have very different reasons for being there.

Traditionally it has been possible for Members of Congress to support the same legislation although perhaps for different reasons.

Alternatively, it is possible to arrive at very different positions even though values and interests are similar.

A daughter and her father– both feel a strong sense of civic duties, but disagreed strongly on political platforms.

People on different sides of an issue may share many common interests and values

It is important to imagine the interests and values that are operating for another.

It is important NOT to make assumptions. Rather, maintain an open, curious stance; even when you agree. Issues are complicated. We can all learn from each other.

When in relationship one can explore interests and values without argument in order to build relationship and trust before looking for common ground.

## **Listening Well – Restating, Reflecting, Reframing**

### *Restating the basic thoughts,*

Thoughts are the story line; what, when, where

### *Reflecting main feelings,*

Feelings are the emotions. (I feel like punching him is NOT a feeling statement)

You may “hear” feelings through WORDS, TONE or PACING.

### *Reframing Hostile Remarks:*

The intention is to de-escalate the heat.

To restate the thoughts and reflect feelings accurately but with less hostility

- Take out Global language/ generalizations, such as “she ALWAYS, she NEVER”
- Phrase thoughts as perspective and impressions
- Name specific behaviors, rather than generalizations
- Avoid name calling.

Older Neighbor: She is a terrible mother. Her kids run wild. They are out after dark, playing in the street. And they have no respect for anything; they run a stick up and down MY fence, call me names, and throw things into MY yard. It’s infuriating. This has got to stop.

You Respond: You observe the children doing things that seem dangerous; staying out after dark, and being in the street. There has been damage to your property. And when you interact with them they call you names. They don’t seem to respect you or your property. This is VERY hard to deal with, exasperating.

## **Speaking Well: being clear, assertive, and nonjudgmental**

### I MESSAGE / I STATEMENT

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .

*Your emotions      something happens      the effect on you*

Mom to Teen:

I felt disappointed when I found the dishes weren’t done because I want to be able to depend on you.

Coworkers:

I felt really upset when the budget decision was made without my involvement because I want to have control over the jobs for which I am responsible.

More examples, I –Messages within a longer statement:

*I am really sad that the situation between our two households has gotten so tense. I am anxious all the time. The children are playing in the street and that seems dangerous to me, I am concerned about them. They are also playing in my yard, coming in for their balls, running through the newly planted garden. They call names, fairly rude names, when I correct them. I want to protect my property and I want us to have a better working relationship. I want to feel safe.*

*My father died of wound complications from his last tour of duty. It was a horrible death to watch. Since 911, congress has released its authority as the branch of government that declares war. I don't want to see more suffering. I don't want other families to go through what we've been through. I want to be represented in the decision to go to war. I want you to vote to repeal the Authorization to use Military Force. I want to be represented. And now I would like to hear your position on this.*

### **When the situation is very hot, and you need to stay calm.**

Your goal is to remain RESPONSIVE and not become reactive; to negotiate rather than fight or flee.

Going to the Balcony (manage your own internal thoughts to stay calm, calmness can be contagious)

Pause Before Responding

Name the Game (blame, guilt, manipulation, bribery, threats)

Pinch Your Palm

Use the Power of NOT Reacting (an opponent may want you reactive and off balance)