

“Fierce Conversations”

Overview

What gets talked about in an organization and how it gets talked about determines what will or won't happen. Fierce Conversation training focuses on improving personal and organizational performance, uncovering and addressing core issues, and enriching relationships, all of which deliver the skills needed to help current and future leaders tackle tough challenges and implement lasting change. When you think of a fierce conversation, think passion, integrity, authenticity, and collaboration. Think cultural transformation...Think leadership!

The conversational tools taught in Fierce Conversation training provide an actionable framework to change your approach to the conversations that impact your results and become the behavior that propels individuals and organizations toward success.

Why conversations? Fierce believes that success or failure occurs, gradually, then suddenly, one conversation at a time. With the tools and approach taught in Fierce Conversations training, you will gain the ability to move your conversations and relationships towards success, address pressing issues, make high stakes educational decisions, solve costly problems, design winning strategies, evaluate opportunities and generate significant results. This is true whether you are managing your staff, developing future teacher-leaders, implementing key educational initiatives, or growing and maintaining stakeholder conversations.

Begin listening to yourself as you have never listened before. Begin to overhear yourself avoiding the topic, changing the subject, holding back, telling little lies, and being imprecise in your language, being uninteresting even to yourself. At least once today, when something inside you says, “This is an opportunity to be fierce,” stop for a moment, take a deep breath, then come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real. Say something that is true for you.

The structure of Fierce is to use the Socratic method in discussion of:

Three transformational ideas:

- Make the connection between conversations and your personal and professional success.
- Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. The conversation is the relationship.
- All conversations are with myself and sometimes they involve other people.

Four Objectives of Fierce Conversations

- Interrogate Reality
- Provoke Learning
- Tackle Tough Challenges
- Enrich Relationships

Seven Steps of Fierce Conversations

Determine the most pressing issue

Fierce conversations should be about a real and current issue. State the issue or problem.

Clarify the issue

When a problem is first stated, it is often not specific. The problem must include what people will not do and/or what is the desired behavior. This results in a data search that could include both quantitative and qualitative data.

Review the current impact

Specify what is currently happening and, if applicable, what should be continued.

Decide what will happen if nothing changes

Determine what will happen if there are no personnel or skill changes, and what would be your next actions.

Determine one's personal contribution

Contributions can be covert and overt. One must determine what to say or do. Doing nothing during a crisis contributes to the status quo. As paraphrased from Dante's *Inferno*, "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of great moral crises maintain their neutrality."

A Native American story refers to the "suicide spear." As one man awakens in the morning and leaves the tepee, he says, "It's a good day to fly, and it's a good day to die. I am putting my spear into the ground. If you are going to kill me, do it now." One can successfully do this only two or three times, as it identifies a point on which there is no compromise.

Describe the ideal outcome

One must be able to describe the ideal state. Unless this state can be detailed, it can never be reached.

Commit to action

Plans should be made specifying to what you are committed and the related timeline. This is best done with a small group to illicit a specific commitment. If done with a large group like a faculty, only general commitments will be possible.

Four conversational models:

- **Team Conversations:** Engage teams in frictionless debates that interrogate multiple, often competing realities, resulting in the best decisions for the organization, enthusiastically implemented.
- **Coaching Conversations:** Engage individuals in conversations that increase clarity, improve understanding and provide impetus for change – resulting in professional development, a bias for action and accelerated results.
- **Delegation Conversations:** Clarify responsibilities and raise accountability, ensuring that each teacher/employee has a clear path of development, action plans are implemented, goals are achieved, and leaders are free to take on more complex responsibilities.
- **Confrontation Conversations:** Engage individuals and teams in conversations that confront and resolve attitudinal, performance or behavioral issues, while also enriching relationships.

Fierce Conversation Training is based on the principles of Susan Scott's business best-sellers *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time*, *Fierce Leadership – A Bold Alternative to the Worst “Best” Practices of Business Today*, and on her years of work leading CEO think tanks. Susan is a best-selling author, leadership development architect, and a recognized thought leader in the global business community.

Taken/edited in part from the Fierce Conversations Journal and the Fierce website at:
<http://www.fierceinc.com/>