

Application Project for a Leadership Course

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EAE 624
April 12, 2015
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For this application project, I have designed a fictitious course plan for middle management (also designated as 'front line supervisors'). The topic is "Critical Dialogues" and it is based on the well-known book *Crucial Conversations*. The course would be a 4-hour workshop providing front line supervisors with tools that would allow them to practically and successfully navigate difficult conversations. It will help them master skills to resolve critical dialogues in a dignified, professional manner leading to positive outcomes. Having read the book, I was able to develop a course plan (Appendix A) in which I defined two prerequisite assignments for the class (Appendix B), which I supplemented with present case studies (Appendix C) and additional course material (Appendix D). This learner-centered lesson plan was constructed based on the adult learning theories that were studied in the class EDAE 624 "Adult Teaching and Learning 1", the adult learning methods reviewed in the class EDAE 620 "Processes and Methods" and additional research. The theoretical framework includes Malcom Knowles' s andragogy assumptions as well as, the learning orientations of constructivism and transformative learning, including the application of two main instruction methods : self-directed and experiential learning mode.

Andragogy & Malcom Knowles

Knowles provided the field of adult education with a practical instructional guide by describing six assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners. These characteristics are featured throughout the lecture. Adult learners are mature students whose professional experience has already deepened their academic studies. As such, the course material, case studies, and lecture discussion topics are drawn from real-world examples in order to bring the learners closer to the subject and to make the material more personally relevant. In addition, seasoned adult learners are highly motivated to build on their own experiences as they learn to deal with real-life tasks and problems. One of my prerequisite

assignments and pre-lecture "warm-up" time sessions offers a great opportunity to help learners discover their 'needs to know' and to establish front line supervisors who will be engaged in the lecture. The learner's experience will play an important role throughout the course. Each participant has accumulated an impressive and ever- growing set of experiences throughout his/her personal and professional life. As the instructor, I will include opportunities for discussion throughout the course so as to draw upon that fertile resource for learning and to allow for cooperative learning. These exchange opportunities will encourage students to reflect on prior experiences and to share these encounters with the class. In addition, as people mature, their earning power and professional status rises, so I designed my course to tap into the motivation for personal gain and to engage the target audience, front line supervisors, to boost their acquisition of human resources tools in order to fortify their already well-earned standing. Another of Knowles's assumptions concerns the learning relevance. Adult learners manage their professional growth asking about the need to learn something. The goal of this lecture is to lead managers to reflect upon and to appreciate the information learned in the session and to invite them to use it for future experiences. The aim of the session is to engage their already fully developed areas of expertise and to invite them to acquire new, relevant skills that will help give them a sense of accomplishment and keep them motivated to strive to become better managers.

Orientation of learning

Constructivism

This learning theory involves learners in the process of acquiring meaning and knowledge. In my session, this theory will be used throughout the coursework to foster critical thinking and to create motivated and independent students. As the facilitator, I will present some of the course materials and actively engage the front line supervisors by posing questions to the audience and launching discussion on the points covered. The interaction and exchange during the course will be essential to the learner. Students

will be asked to participate in some role-playing as we engage in predictable but edgy critical dialogues. The practice will connect the front line supervisors to the course content and will apply theoretical points of engagement to their daily life as managers. I will observe, provide direction and feedback as managers practice skills of direct and dignified encounters designed to correct problems while boosting morale. I will ask the class to participate in follow-up reasoning and constructive criticism.

Transformative Learning

Knowles emphasizes the importance of the adult learning experience necessary to furthering professional development and growth. Transformative learning is a mode that prompts students to evaluate previous assumptions and patterns and to adapt to new behaviors in order to function successfully; to master the dialoguing elements that are the objective of the lecture. Mezirow (2000) defines the process of transformative learning as one that allows students to "open up [our] a frame of reference, discard habit of mind, see alternatives, and thereby act differently in the world". In order to foster transformative learning, prior to the class, learners will fill out a brief survey entitled, "Your style under stress" which will help them become more aware of their behaviors and to begin to recognize their values and beliefs. The classroom table set-up will help facilitate group discussion so that each participant will be able to share his/her results within their group. I will allow time for group discussions so as to encourage dialogue within each group as participants share findings and recognize alternate perspectives, etc. At the end of the sharing period, I will ask participants to use their audience response system and enter their score sheet. This exercise will bring the class together and will trigger more collaboration and critical reflection on the results as a whole. Furthermore, the role-playing exercise and the case studies will help front line managers use the concepts covered in the class in order to validate their newly acquired knowledge and develop relationships which will be key as they start their new journey towards empowering staff members to speak directly, honestly and respectfully to one

another. Management peers will be able to help them navigate their course as they invite and shape future dialogues. Front line supervisors attending each workshop will be encouraged to reach out to one another for coaching help.

Furthermore, I will strive to set up the trusting and caring environment that will be essential to the overall success of the learning experience.

Instruction Strategies

In order to achieve the learning objectives of this course, I will use some of the instructional strategies that our coursework has introduced us to, such as self-directed and experiential approaches. Knowles has defined self-directed learning as a key assumption of adult learning. Experienced professionals have amassed a great deal of on-the-job experience and they have typically formulated a strong sense of what goals they would like to achieve. By being self-directed, students can participate in evaluating their learning needs, and evaluating learning outcomes. For this lecture, front line supervisors are to be provided the means for gaining new skills and knowledge or for developing attitudes that acknowledge their standing while helping them remain open to new ideas that can enhance work performance. The classroom assignment involves role play and review of case studies. These exercises foster critical thinking and push students of all ages and expertise to reflect on the presumed validity of long-held assumptions and find solutions to stubborn problems by using the tools provided by the course. In addition, these exercises can reduce apprehension about using new behavioral methods when interacting with colleagues and employees.

The great Chinese philosopher, Confucius said, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand." This pedagogic truth has been heard through the centuries. American philosopher of education, John Dewey, celebrated the benefits of experiential learning in the classroom. He was one of many educational scholars who emphasized the process of

learning over the precise content of what was being learned. Experiential strategies are learner-centered activity oriented and have more of a holistic learning approach. The American education theorist, David Kolb explained in more detail the cycle of experiential learning that students will follow in the Critical Dialogue workshop. During the review of case studies, the front line supervisors will engage in the first stage of experiential learning: concrete experience. Then they will explore the means by which they would dialogue with their staff during a conversation. Then, learners will move to the second stage: reflective observation. During this step, front line supervisors will think about what they had just experienced and they will analyze their actions and any inconsistencies in their experiences. When these learners enter the third stage, abstract conception, students will draw conclusions about the role playing they have participated in and they will progress to the fourth stage, active experimentation. During this final step, managers will adapt their own reflections to the principles of the workshop and they will reincorporate those insights as they reinforce what they have learned. The course will succeed when participants are able to apply the learning to specific contexts using reflection and critical thinking. These examples will increase the front line manager's general workplace understanding and will promote better information retention. Experiential learning also often shows more intrinsic motivation and engagement because course participants are actively engaged in the learning and also in cooperative learning. I salute the love of learning that must be present when adult learners challenge themselves to move beyond hard-won experience to an openness to learn more. Making reference again to Kolb (1984, 38) "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience".

Conclusion

In this application project, I utilize some of the learning theories learned to ground the course materials into a tangible learning experience. There are few key course elements that I must keep at all time during my course development. To reach adult learning transfer, it is important to provide practical and pertinent topics and to make use of a variety of experiences as learning opportunities by facilitating class dialogue toward problem-solving. I should strive to create a learning environment that appreciates diversity and openness and that values analysis. Finally, I must incorporate several different ways to reach different learning styles to make sure that all students stay motivated and engaged throughout the lecture.

Appendix A - Course Plan

Title: CRITICAL DIALOGUE

Length: 4-hour class

Class level: Front Line Supervisors

Instructor: Anne Teillet

Class size max: 20

Room requirements:

Class with 4 tables for 5 people

Projector/screen/computer/Audience response system

Post-it poster page on easel and markers

Course Description:

No one is immune to discussion where stakes are high, and opinions or emotions run strong. Participants will learn how to successfully engage in difficult conversations with staff and/or co-workers to successfully manage and strengthen relationships and foster teamwork results. This course is reserved for front line supervisors.

Course Objectives:

- Identify the components of a critical dialogue
- Create a safe environment to talk about anything with anybody
- Understand the influence of the different level of speech over others
- Discuss how to master the elements of a conversation in a critical dialogue
- Understand different types of decision making strategies and how to move toward action and results

Time	Procedures Followed
5 min.	<p>Warm up / Icebreaker Activity Every attendee will introduce themselves to the group and answer the following questions: - Why is this class important to you? - Do you have one question that you want to have answered by the end of the course.</p>
30 min.	<p>How communication is important Each 5 groups share their pre-assignment #1 "personal "Style under stress" assessment and discuss Class participate in audience response system to enter their personal results and discuss results as a whole</p>
35 min.	<p>Dialogue at work Assignment#2 : Discuss with group</p>
5 min.	<p>BREAK</p>
150 min.	<p>Benefits/principles of positive conversations Key components to master the critical dialogue Role Play using the case studies Based on new findings, discuss again the prerequisite assignments and involved the group in finding solutions</p>

Time	Procedures Followed
15 min.	<p data-bbox="354 285 730 317">How great leaders inspire action</p> <p data-bbox="354 354 1403 417">Wrap-up with summarizing course and confirming that questions in the first part of the class have been answered.</p>

Appendix B - Prerequisite Assignment #1: Style Under Stress

T	F	1. At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
T	F	2. I have put off returning phone calls or e-mails because I simply didn't want to deal with the person who sent them.
T	F	3. Sometimes when people bring up a touchy or awkward issue I try to change the subject.
T	F	4. When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give my full and candid opinion.
T	F	5. Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
T	F	6. When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer weak or insincere compliments to soften the blow.
T	F	7. In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
T	F	8. If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be.
T	F	9. When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all.
T	F	10. When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking—terms such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
T	F	11. Sometimes when things get a bit heated I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
T	F	12. If I really get into a heated discussion, I've been known to be tough on the other person. In fact, they might even feel a bit insulted or hurt.
T	F	13. When I'm discussing an important topic with others, sometimes I move from trying to make my point to trying to win the battle.
T	F	14. In the middle of a tough conversation, I often get so caught up in arguments that I miss how I'm coming across to others.
T	F	15. When talking gets tough and I do something hurtful, I'm quick to apologize for my mistakes.
T	F	16. When I think about a conversation that took a bad turn, I tend to focus first on what I did that was wrong rather than focus on others' mistakes.
T	F	17. When I've got something to say that others might not want to hear, I avoid starting out with tough conclusions, and instead start with facts that help them understand where I'm coming from.
T	F	18. I can tell very quickly when others are holding back or feeling defensive in a conversation.
T	F	19. Sometimes I decide that it's better not to give harsh feedback because I know that it's bound to cause real problems.
T	F	20. When conversations aren't working, I step back from the fray, think about what's happening, and take steps to make it better.

- T F** 21. When others get defensive because they misunderstand me, I immediately get us back on track by clarifying what I do and don't mean.
- T F** 22. There are some people I'm rough on because, to be honest, they need or deserve what I give them.
- T F** 23. I sometimes make absolute statements like "The fact is..." or "It's obvious that..." to be sure my point gets across.
- T F** 24. If others hesitate to share their views, I sincerely invite them to say what's on their minds, no matter what it is.
- T F** 25. At times I argue hard for my view hoping to keep others from bringing up opinions that would be a waste of energy to discuss anyway.
- T F** 26. Even when things get tense, I adapt quickly to how others are responding to me and try a new strategy.
- T F** 27. When I find that I'm at cross purposes with someone, I often keep trying to win my way rather than looking for common ground.
- T F** 28. When things don't go well, I'm more inclined to see the mistakes others made than notice my own role.
- T F** 29. After I share strong opinions, I go out of my way to invite others to share their views, particularly opposing ones.
- T F** 30. When others hesitate to share their views, I do whatever I can to make it safe for them to speak honestly.
- T F** 31. Sometimes I have to discuss things I thought had been settled because I don't keep track of what was discussed before.
- T F** 32. I find myself in situations where people get their feelings hurt because they thought they would have more of a say in final decisions than they end up having.
- T F** 33. I get frustrated sometimes at how long it takes some groups to make decisions because too many people are involved.

Scoring

Fill out the score sheet on the next page. Each domain contains two to three questions. Next to the question number is either a (T) or (F). For example, under "Masking," question 5, you'll find a (T). If you answered question 5 true, check the box. With question 13, on the other hand, you'll find an (F). Only check that box if you answered the question false—and so on. Your Style Under Stress score will show you which forms of silence or violence you turn to most often.

Style Under Stress

Your silence and violence scores give you a measure of how frequently you fall into these less-than-perfect strategies. It's actually possible to score high in both. A high score (one or two checked boxes per domain) means you use this technique fairly often. It also means you're human. Most people toggle between holding back and becoming too forceful.

Masking	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 (T)	Controlling	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 (T)
	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 (T)		<input type="checkbox"/> 8 (T)
Avoiding	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 (T)	Labeling	<input type="checkbox"/> 9 (T)
	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 (T)		<input type="checkbox"/> 10 (T)
Withdrawing	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 (T)	Attacking	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 (T)
	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 (T)		<input type="checkbox"/> 12 (T)
SILENCE TOTAL		VIOLENCE TOTAL	

Appendix B - Prerequisite Assignment #2

1. Describe a recent (or pending) situation where you had (or need to have) a critical dialogue

Describe the facts of the situation, your story of why it happened, and your emotions.

2. What do you want to happen based on your pending conversation?

- a. For yourself
- b. For the other person
- c. For the relationship

3. What do you NOT want to happen?

- a. For yourself
- b. For the other person
- c. For the relationship

APPENDIX C - Case Studies

Case Study#1: Confrontational Attitude

Sylvia Stevens has worked at the hospital for four years. In the last few months, several of her coworkers have provided the nurse manager of their unit with negative feedback about her behavior. All have described confrontational and unprofessional interactions with Sylvia. Sylvia is often seen rolling her eyes during the "shift huddle," when the nurses gather to discuss each patient, and has yelled at coworkers on the unit. After each incident, the nurse manager asked Sylvia's coworkers to speak to her about the offensive behavior. In each case, when the coworker told Sylvia she didn't appreciate her behavior, Sylvia denied it had occurred and ended the conversation.

The nurse manager has also spoken with Sylvia three times in the past year about her behavior, and this has led to temporary improvements. A few months after these discussions, however, the negative, abrasive, and aggressive behavior that Sylvia's peers have described resurfaced.

In the last four weeks, Sylvia's colleagues have reported several negative interactions:

- A physician's assistant complained that Sylvia made a comment about a patient's "disgusting" body odor within earshot of the patient.
- A nurse coworker described how Sylvia yelled at her for asking too many questions during report.
- An ancillary nutritional aide told the nurse manager she doesn't want to interact with Sylvia after hearing her say on numerous occasions that the hospital's food is "horrible" and she "wouldn't feed it to a dog."

Recognizing that emotions and stakes are high-the nurse manager risks losing a tenured employee and Sylvia could lose her job-and that there will be differences of opinion, the nurse manager decides to follow the framework for crucial conversations to try to resolve the conflict.

Case Study #2: Undesirable Behavior

Christine McDaniels has been working on the unit for the last 10 years and appears to have a good working relationship with her peers. During the last six months, the unit has changed from a medical to a surgical unit, leading to significant changes in nursing practice and the patient population. In addition, many new staff members have joined the team.

During these months of transition, several new staff members have reported feeling intimidated by Christine and describe her as rude. The behavior they've complained about includes the provision of unfair assignments, an insistence on working with certain people, snide comments, and shouting. The nurse manager is perplexed by these complaints, which are the first in Christine's file. But when she informally surveys the staff, she learns that all of Christine's peers are aware of Christine's tendency to behave this way and have tolerated it because they're fearful of her retaliation-she is chair of the scheduling committee and has been known to "punish" coworkers who disagree with her by manipulating the schedule.

The nurse manager reflects on her personal goals for her upcoming discussion with Christine. She hopes Christine will acknowledge that her behavior has been counterproductive to the team and has alienated her coworkers. She knows the stakes are high, opinions may vary, and emotions are likely to be strong. In addition, as a new manager, she recognizes that she is most comfortable shutting down and simply agreeing with the other person's point of view. Thus, the nurse manager takes a moment to reflect on her own communication shortcomings and vows to stay focused during the discussion.

Case Study #3: A problematic staff member

A staff member who doesn't get along with other staff in the office, causing frequent squabbles.

Appendix D – Course Materials


CRITICAL DIALOGUES

*"The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes
but in seeing with new eyes".
--Marcel Proust--*




Course Objectives

- Identify the components of a critical dialogue
- Create a safe environment to talk about anything with anybody
- Understand the influence of the different level of speech over others
- Discuss how to master the elements of a conversation in a critical dialogue
- Understand different types of decision making strategies and how to move toward action and results



Introduction

- Introduce yourself (*Full name, work department*)
- Why is this class important to you?
- Do you have one question that you want to have answered by the end of the course?



What is a Dialogue?

Typical Dialogue

- Social
- Work related
- Family
- Business
- Pleasant/Non-threatening

Critical Dialogue

- Opinions differ
- Stakes are high
- Emotions are strong

Assignment #1: Survey

Let's Discuss

How you say it...

□ Tone, inflection, and facial expression accounts for **93%** of your message the actual words account for 7%.

□ Be aware of (Non-verbal components)

- Eye Contact
- Body Posture
- Distance/physical contact
- Facial Expression
- Gestures
- Vocal Tone, inflection, volume
- Fluency
- Timing
- Clothing



Critical Dialogues at Work

- . Broken rules
- . Mistakes
- . Lack of Support
- . Incompetence
- . Poor Teamwork
- . Disrespect
- . Micromanagement



Examples:

- Asking for a raise/promotion
- Evaluating a peer or subordinate
- Confronting an abusive person
- Addressing inappropriate behavior

Assignment #2: Questions

Let's Discuss

Why do we withdraw or act out?

- . When experiencing a threat:
 - ✓ Hormones = high emotions
 - ✓ Increase heart rate and blood pressure
 - ✓ Difficulties with rational thoughts
 - ✓ React under pressure
- . Flight/Fight response
 - Can be experienced when frustrated and interrupted
- . Feel unsafe = silence or violence

 *When stuck = Critical Dialogue*

Mastery

. Need to be able to successfully address emotional and politically risky issues

. Reflect on our self:

1. Master your story (*Identify your role*)
2. State your path
3. Explore other point of views (*Consider, compromise?*)
4. Move to action (*Stay positive, get results, document*)

Shared Meaning

. Focus on what the message is

. Learn to recognize the signs (*violence/silence*)

. Understand your styles and tendencies when under stress

Benefits of Critical Dialogues

. Improved professional life

. Improved physical health

. Improved mental health

. Greater satisfaction

. Positive outcomes: teamwork, etc..



Principles of Critical Dialogues

- . Get unstuck
- . Start with heart
- . Learn to look
- . Make it safe
- . Master my stories
- . State my path
- . Explore others' paths
- . Move to action

Get Unstuck

- . Assess the problem
- . What is the real issue?
- . What is holding you back?



Start with the Heart

- . What do you really want to accomplish?
- . What is holding me back?



Learn to Look

- Observe behaviors
- Identify potential for adverse behaviors
- Address your stress



Make It Safe

- Respect
- Be observant
- Non-threatening
- Personal space
- Tone, rate, cadence of voice
- Setting



Master my Stories

- Base your conversations on facts
- Identify your role
- Try to see both sides of the situation
- Think about what you want to say
- Be reasonable

State my Path

- Share your facts
- Tell your story
- Ask for others' Paths
- Talk tentatively
- Encourage testing



Be persuasive not abrasive

Explore Other Path

- Consider other views
- Other Solutions
- Compromise
- Understanding does not equate with agreement

Be sincere, curious, patient, encourage others to retrace their path, ask when?, How?, What?

Move to Action

- Don't keep rehashing issues
- Make a plan (*Agree, Build, Compare*)
- Stay positive and get results
- Document

Assignment #2: Role Play


Review

- . What is a critical dialogue?
- . Reasons that critical dialogues are different
- . Principles
- . Benefits to learn how to have critical dialogues

The Golden Circle

How great leaders inspire action

http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html



“Create the change you want to see”
--Gandhi

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