

Resolving Conflicts and Differences: AAA Leadership Dialogue Skill – Failsafe Feedback Framework

How to give feedback, make requests or resolve conflicts while taking full personal responsibility for your own feelings, judgments, opinions and stories so that your feedback and requests get a fair hearing, increase connection and have the best chance for change.

AAA Failsafe Feedback Framework

- 1. “I want to talk to you about (issue). My positive intention for this conversation is....”**
- 2. “I noticed / saw / heard....”**
Facts, Neutral, Objective
- 3. “I was thinking....”**
My opinions, fears, concerns, conclusions I drew, meaning I made, the story I told myself (without blame, judgment or criticism)
- 4. “I felt....”**
Feelings triggered in me (mad, sad, glad, scared) (without implying the other person caused them)
- 5. “I intend / want....”**
Positive intentions and outcomes I want for you, me, us, and the situation
- 6. “I request”**
Specific Do Differently behaviors and actions
- 7. “I’m doing / owning / contributing....”**
What I’m doing, the commitment I’m making, the part I’m playing in the solution
- 8. “I’m listening....”**
I genuinely want to hear you and find a solution that works for both of us

Failsafe Feedback Preparation Worksheet:

Must Have Before the Conversation and During Preparation:

YOU in the Accountability Loop!

1. What behavior or other specific change do you want? (What's the "Do Differently?")
2. What outcome and benefits would that change provide? What would result from the "Do Differently" change or new behavior?
3. What are the consequences and negative impact of the current behavior or actions? What will be the cost of not making a change?
4. What other purposes and benefits would a change enable? (For you, me, us, team, etc.)
5. What other positive intentions do you have for the conversation? (i.e., support, acknowledgment, catalyst, etc.)
6. What don't you want to happen in the conversation? What outcomes don't you want?

Failsafe Feedback Framework Conversation Worksheet

1. I want to talk to you today about (the issue) and my overall positive intention for this conversation is:
(examples: to clarify, to resolve an issue, to create a new agreement, to get back on track, to generate an important outcome, etc.)
2. I noticed/saw/heard:
(facts, neutral, objective)
3. When this (the facts) happened, I was thinking:
(the meaning I made, the conclusions I drew, the fear I experienced – all self-revealing and without blame, judgment or criticism of the other person)
4. I felt:
Feelings triggered in me (mad, sad, glad, scared) (without implying the other person caused them)
5. I intend/outcomes I want:
(Positive intentions and outcomes I want for you, me, us, and the situation)
6. I request:
Specific Do Differently behaviors and actions
7. I'm doing/contributing:
What I'm doing, the commitment I'm making, the part I'm playing in the solution
8. I'm listening:
I genuinely want to hear you and find a solution that works for both of

Tough Conversations That Result in Agreement

What Makes a Conversation Tough?

- Stakes are High
- Big impact to outcomes and/or the relationship, including possible loss
- Perspectives and Opinions Differ
- Emotions Run Strong

Why Have Tough Conversations? The Opportunity

- Because Stakes, Impact and Consequences are High!
- The Transformation that's Possible is Game Changing – both to the outcomes and to the relationship
- Tough Conversation Effectiveness is a necessary leadership skill to create a high trust working environment and a high performance team

Two Conditions for Productive Conversation

- Alignment on the Outcome = Mutual Purpose (going for a result that is in both parties interests)
- Safety = Mutual Respect
- Safe from harm and mal-intent
- Safe from disrespect
- Safe from blame, criticism, and judgment

Must Haves Before the Conversation

- YOU in the Accountability Loop
- Clear, Specific Request (the change you want)
- The Desired Outcome (the results you're ultimately trying to achieve)
- Your Positive Intentions for both parties and the Relationship

Prep Worksheet for a Tough but Mutual Agreement Conversation

- What change do you want? **What's the "Do Differently?"**
- **What outcome and benefits would that change provide?**
- What are the **consequences and impact** of the current behavior? What are the consequences of NOT changing the current behavior?
- **What other positive intentions do you have for the conversation?** (for you, me, us, the situation)
- What DON'T you want?



Listen to Understand their Perspective and Interests

- Give the person **adequate space** to express themselves – don't rush them
- **Perception check** and ask questions for understanding
- **Paraphrase** to provide clear signal you've heard them: "Here's what I thought you said – did I get that right?"
- For areas that have energy, ask if they'd **like to share more**
- If agitated, **ask them to slow down their talking** because you really want to hear and understand
- **Empathize** when you can, ex. "That makes sense to me."

Dialogue to Reach Agreement

- Focus on what can be done **DIFFERENTLY** and **HOW** you can do that
- Talk tentatively
- Ask for their thoughts and opinions – "I'm thinking this might work, what do you think?"
- Build upon where you do agree
- Surface challenges, ask what they need
- Offer support and hold boundaries (don't offer what you can't really provide)
- Test agreement – does it accomplish the greater purpose and benefits? Achieve what you really want?

Keep Coming Back to Your Anchor Elements

- The **Outcome** You Want (the "Do Differently" and Greater Purpose and Benefits)
- Your **Positive Intentions** (For Them, You, the Situation, the Company, your Relationship, etc.)
- **Collaborate**: What Can You Each Contribute? (To accomplish the result)

Mind the Essential Conditions!

- **Alignment on the Outcome = Mutual Purpose** (going for a result that is in both parties interests)
- **Safety = Mutual Respect**
 - Safe from harm and mal-intent
 - Safe from disrespect
 - Safe from blame, criticism, judgment and abandonment



KEY BUSINESS LEADER

To Promote Collaboration in Dialogue

1. **Listen Actively** *Ask (perception check), Mirror (reflect feelings), Paraphrase, Prime, Slow down*
2. **Apologize Authentically** *For misstatements, offense or harm – Contrast what I did intend and did not intend*
3. **Commit to Achieving Agreement** *Problem solve for satisfaction of both interests, find a mutual purpose by moving up the triangle*
4. **Talk Tentatively** *Inviting testing of your story (differentiate facts from meaning), and input to suggested solutions*
5. **Build upon where you Agree** *Adding what's missing, staying focused on solution*
6. **Test Agreement** *Comparing and explaining differences, adjust for mutuality, utilize recovery*

To Repair Alignment Look For And Resolve

- **Competing Intentions:** Often recognized when the person says “I can’t change behavior because XXX will then happen and prevent me from achieving that important result” – **Share your CARE for them and their goals; Help problem solve to achieve both results**
- **Lack of Natural Impact or Benefit:** Often recognized when the person says “I don’t see how that’s important” or “You’re making a big deal out of nothing” - **Move up the triangle until you find a purpose, benefit or consequence that both experience.**

To Repair Safety

- Notice when safety needs repairing – often the person becomes defensive, attacking, withdrawing, or acquiescing (fight, flight or freeze)
- Step out of the content of the conversation and restore safety by:
 - Sharing your positive intentions
 - APOLOGIZING for any misstatements, offense or harm
 - Sharing what you DON'T and DO want

When to take a Time Out

- If someone is in the Victim Loop or the conditions of Alignment and Safety aren't intact and can't be repaired, call for a Time Out (no resolution will happen without those conditions being intact)
- Choose a time to reconnect – don't leave that open ended
- Acknowledge and appreciate the other person for their efforts, time, and willingness to engage and to reconnect

When YOU need a Time Out

- If you get emotionally triggered during the conversation and can't quickly get back to neutral
- (having inner thoughts OR outer actions of defensiveness, attacking, resentment, blame, withdrawing, etc.)
- If you lose your ability to empathize with the other person, seeing them as a villain or victim, and you are internally judging, blaming, criticizing and labeling
- If you can't find any alignment or mutual purpose



When Agreement Isn't Possible

- When the competing interests are too high stakes and common ground alignment can't be found
- When the safety condition is permanently damaged –especially respect
- When either person cannot understand their impact on others and empathize (put themselves in the others shoes)
- When either person cannot take the others interests into account (sometimes from a huge values conflict)

“Do Differently” Mutual Agreement

- **Do Differently!** If the agreement doesn't have do differently behaviors and actions – nothing will change
- **Provide for Recovery** – what you each will do when the new behavior or action can't or doesn't happen
- **Specify Check Ins and Follow Up**
- **Provide Acknowledgment and Appreciation**, for efforts and dedication
- **Celebrate and Appreciate results!!**