



**Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, Episode 35
How to Handle Conflict Like a Pro -- Produced By Suzie Price**

Handle Conflict – Transcript
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Suzie Price: Today's podcast is brought to you by audible.com, get a free audio book download and a 30 day free trial at audibletrial.com/wakeupeagerworkforce. Audible has over 150,000 titles to choose from for your iPhone, Android, Kindle, or MP3 player. Our topic today is about *How to Handle Conflict Like a Pro*. And our quote for today's program is from Max Lucado, where he says, "Conflict is inevitable but combat is optional." I'm going to give you tools today that are gonna help you get better at having less combat and help you handle the inevitable conflict that comes up every day. So the tools that you're going to get today are going to help you have difficult conversations and help you have them effectively. So it can be between two team members that are in conflict with each other and you're facilitating them working better together, it could be you having a one-on-one conversation about poor performance or workplace habits that are a problem. It could be about problems or conflicts you have with a peer and how they work together, their behaviors. But if you're facing any one of these types of challenges on the job, and who isn't, we all, there's conflict all around us at work, this episode is going to help you.

I'm going to share a four step process using, you guessed it, an acronym. The acronym is PREP, P-R-E-P, and it's a process or a structure that you can use to help you handle any kind of challenging discussion, conflict, problems. I'm going to be sharing with you material from my client workshops and we're going to go through the four steps and I'm going to provide links to a worksheet that you can use to prepare for calls and use the PREP process. And I'm also going to provide to you a flashcard or a memory jogger card of the steps so if you like them, you can print them out and use them. So this process works, I've used it for many years, I've used it to help myself with handling conflict and actually becoming a facilitator who helps to parties within a work environment resolve conflict, and I've taught it to more than 500 professionals who have, I don't think I've had anybody say they didn't get anything out of it. There's a lot of nice nuances in here and I'm excited to share them with you. So Michael, hit the music and let's get started.

Intro: Welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, a show designed for leaders, trainers and consultants who are responsible for employee selection and professional development. Each episode is packed full with insider tips, best practices, expert interviews and inspiration. Please welcome the host who is helping leaders, trainers and consultants everywhere, Suzie Price.

Hey there, my name is Suzie Price and this episode, Episode 35 of the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, *Handling Conflict Like a Pro*, is getting started now. I am bringing it to you, I am a Professional Facilitator, a Consultant and Author and the Producer of this podcast. I'm the Founder of the company Priceless Professional Development where we've been helping leaders build energy, commitment and communication in their organization since 2004. So as you can tell through my intro, I'm excited to bring this to you. This PREP, P-R-E-P, four step process for conflict is something you'll be able to use. We're gonna, I'm gonna ask you to think about a real

situation and try to lay what we're doing in your mind by thinking about those, that situation and how you would apply it. You'll be able to use the worksheets so, and the memory jogger card to help you. So I'm excited that you're going to leave this podcast today with some real tools that are going to help you be more effective and influential because basically it's, what it's going to do is make you more effective so that you're not putting aside or putting off conversations that you need to have because you're going to have a structure and a plan for having a more effective conversation, you're going to be able to create greater work life balance because when you're having those conversations that you know are important for you to have as a leader, well, you're going to have them, and so you're going to be addressing challenges and issues and conflict that weighs down productivity and it's stressful for everybody. So that's where the better work life balance will come for you. And it's going to help you grow, it's going to help you build trust and commitment on your team because this process is designed to do just that, to handle conflict in such a way that people feel valued, but that you tell the truth and that you're honest. It's good for you, it's good for your company, it's good for your team and it's good for your employees. So I'm excited about it.

I would like you to think about a situation or different situations that you've had at work when you've had a problem you've needed to resolve. So I want you to kind of get something in mind, as I mentioned a little bit ago, that you can think about as we walk through this and think about how you would apply the steps that I'm sharing in that situation, you know it could have been about a conflict around a work product, could be personality differences, somebody you don't get along with or they're not being effective on the team, could be someone behaving poorly on the job or not doing their job, it could be something big or it could be something small. Then I want you to have that situation in mind as we go forward, And I want you to think of it right now, when you think about handling problems and conflict, think about that situation. What is it? What did you pick? What came to mind? I know something did. What do you do well when there is conflict? And what are your strengths? So when there's a problem or a challenge, what is something that you're particularly good at? And then when the same thing happens, what do you struggle with? What's your blind spot or growth edge, or maybe it's even a weakness? So want you to think about that? Think about that within the context of the situation that came to mind.

The situation that came to mind for me was something that really wasn't that big, but I remember at that time, it was early in my career and so it was, I was working with a team and we had an administrator and she, her name was Anne, and I was frustrated with the work she was doing for me. So I wasn't getting things that I was supposed to be getting and I needed to address it, it wasn't a really big deal but I remember early on in my career in particular, I really did not know how to address situations like that, I didn't know what to say, how to address it, so I kept putting it off. So when I think about that, and I think about answering the questions I just asked you about strengths, you know, one of my strengths is that I'm considerate, you know, when there's conflict I care about, I truly do care about the other person, I always, and another thing is I'm usually not caught unaware that there's a problem because I'm good at picking up the problem and I'm good at having ideas and solutions. But my weakness, especially then it was a weakness, just not just a blind spot, a blind spot too, but really a weakness, is I would delay putting off the conversation or when I did finally have the conversation, I'd be too abrupt.



So think about what your strengths are, own those because we all have them. Some people are really good at being very factual and literal and being a very good listener, but maybe not so good about telling the truth. Some people are really good about being the truth, telling the truth, but they don't express concern and care. Whatever it is, kind of, get a handle on or think about strengths and weaknesses or blind spots in the area of handling conflict and know what yours are and when you don't handle conflict on a job, like in my situation where I was putting it off with Anne, I mean what happens on the job?

I'm going to give you some statistics in a minute. But anecdotally, what happens when you don't address conflict, problems, that you let them fester or they blow up? Well, one thing is they can blow up. But in the meantime, like with Anne, I was frustrated with her, I remember our relationship was strained; she knew something was wrong, I knew something was wrong, but we weren't communicating about it so our ability to work together was not very efficient and other people were frustrated too with the same thing, and so we were all individually frustrated and then we were going individually to our manager and complaining. So we were wasting his time too because, and he was kinda not, at the time, handling the situation. So there's a lot of impact and there's statistics like I said, that I'm going to mention to you and I'll just go ahead and list them here.

Some of the facts, in the United States, we spend at least per employee, three hours per week dealing with conflict, dealing or avoiding conflict. So conflict is big in everybody's workday and calculate that out for a year, there's 156 hours a year, which equals to one month spent in dealing with conflict. So it would make sense to learn how to handle conflict. A quarter of the employees who were surveyed said that they avoid conflict and due to avoiding the conflict, they've gotten sick or they've been absent from work cause there's stress related to that. 10% of the employees surveyed said that it had led to conflict at work, had led to project failure. And a third of the people surveyed said that unresolved conflict caused somebody to leave the company or to, they were either fired or they quit. And then some dollar figures attached to all this time and stress is, \$359 billion in paid hours or the equivalent of 385 million working days, are related to unresolved conflict.

So there's a lot of impact around unresolved conflict and why do we have it? Why, why aren't we all good at just having the conversation? And when you master the PREP process, you're going to be like, "Okay, why was I putting this off?" Because it's a very good structure and it's very common sense, but one of the reasons we put it off is one, there's a lot of conflict, so there's a lot going on, we're all busy and then if there's conflict, you just think, "Okay, maybe if I just ignore it, it'll go away or it'll get better," usually it doesn't, it gets worse. Another thing is we don't have a structure like PREP or something else that we've practiced and it's actually a skillset, like many things that we do in life there's a skillset related to expertise in it and we've never had the tools or the skillset. I know for me, I've had plenty of bad role models, people who weren't effective and I, now in my life, have had over the years as I've become an adult and now way past becoming an adult, but through the years I've had great role models, but prior to early in those days, like with Anne up to Anne's days, whenever I was having a challenge in that role, early on in my career, I hadn't had any good role models and maybe you haven't either.



Sometimes too, I have been afraid that I'm going to make things worse. So there's lots of reasons why we have unresolved or badly handled conflict.

I want to share some statements with you and I want you to think about these, they're all related to conflict and see what your instinct says, do you agree or disagree with each one of these statements? The first statement is conflict is a necessary and healthy part of the life of all organizations, agree or disagree? So if you're not able to see that it is a necessary and healthy part of the life of organizations, I'm going to invite you to think about it because if we have healthy discussions, which is what conflict is, we have constructive conflict where it doesn't go to the edge of explosiveness, but it gets us out of our comfort zone, but it gets us being truth-telling and sharing what we really think and feel, guess what, we're going to have, make better decisions because we all have valuable input, it's just a matter of being able to know how to have the conversation and to say, "Well, wait a minute, this is," it is healthy to disagree as long as we can keep it within the framework of, you know, on the edge of or not going over the edge of fisticuffs or angry or pushing it too far.

Okay, here's another statement; conflict on the job is always the result of personality clashes. Agree or disagree? In truth, and we're going to talk about it today, it's not just because of personality clashes, there are three biggest reasons why there is conflict between people on a job or in a workplace is, one, is personality, we work differently, we communicate differently and so we have some challenges there, but that's not the only reason, we could have competing interests, I'm pulling for the technology and your pulling for the sale, so we have different goals. So we've got to get on the same page around where can we find common ground. And the third is past history, past history, we've had challenges before so now I'm going to hold that against you in my conversation with you as we communicate. And that's not, at that point, is not a personality clash, it's we have history.

Okay, here's another statement; conflict on the job usually represents the normal competitive urge present in most individuals, agree or disagree? So is it just a competitive urge that causes us to have conflict? Well, not just the competitive drive, some of that can come into play, but there can be emotions that come into play. So I may have conflict around something because I am having emotions around it, I mean fear, I'm anxious, I'm jealous, I have personal animosity, I have a bias or a preference or an interest that is different from yours. So we can, you know, have different goals. And so it's not just because other people are competitive, it's a lot of other things are wrapped into why we have conflict. And so it's smart to realize that because if we can learn how to have discussions that get people to open up and share how they feel and they think you can move into the dynamic of, "Okay, now we've had a discussion and now we can all walk together to go look for the solutions or talk about the solutions."

Here's another one; one of the benefits of conflict on the job is that it's sometimes produces useful change, agree or disagree? If you've had good role models for how to handle conflict you might agree with that. And the goal would be to say, "Okay, I'm going to change my thought process or my feeling place around conflict and realize that if we have conflict, we could come from that conflict or those constructive discussions or even challenging discussions with better

information, better insight." It is, you know, learning how to handle differences is the epitome of learning how to handle diversity and understanding differences and valuing people. So you never know more clearly what you do want, until you discovered what you don't want. So conflict, pressure, tension can result in better decisions.

Last statement, do you agree or disagree; conflict is a primary source of stress on the job, agree or disagree? Agree. Conflict, unresolved you, the stats that I talked about, a bunch of money and a lot of time is spent in swirling with around this handling conflict challenge, people leave companies, workplace projects suffer, people get sick, they're absent from work. So it is a primary source of stress on the job and there's an example here, last year I met, was called in to help in a conflict resolution facilitation project and it was between an Executive who had 20 years with the company who was a partner in this company, who was brilliant, knew how to win business, was revered for technical skills, but was in deep and rich conflict with the Sales Manager who had only been at the company 3 years and they needed to work together but we're not able to. So it was impeding the business, it was, the sales team didn't want to work with the Executive, the Executive and his team didn't want to work with a sales team. And it started between those two leaders and the CEO of this company said, "You need to work this out." And so that's when I got involved and I used the processes I'm sharing with you today, PREP, the four steps, in that situation. And they were really at loggerheads, they had a lot of differences in personality, they had competing interests and they had personal history, the three biggest things that you deal with around conflict, they had all three, and just methodically going through the process with them, at the end of the very first meeting together, the two of them together, the Executive who really didn't want to do the process and thought that he was right because he had so much experience and he was a Partner, he's a Senior person and he's, you know, a genius in his field, didn't really want any part of making any of this better. At the end of the first meeting, after we'd had individual meetings and then that one first meeting with them together, said in a very soft voice and kind of emotional, "Thank you for this process, I think we've made progress today and I have to tell you that this has been making me sick, I have felt sick about this and have not known what to do." And it was quite an emission from somebody who did not want to fix this or you know, felt stubborn about it. We all can be stubborn about, "No they're wrong and I don't want to try to make it better." So that wasn't Suzie's crazy, good facilitation skills, I mean I worked hard to make it go well, but it was simply me following this four step process and I've used it a bunch over time now, so I've gotten better and better at it because I definitely, if you can see how hard it was for me just to talk to Anne 25 years ago about not doing the work product the way I needed her to do it, you can see that I was struggling with that, the fact that I can move from that to this contentious situation and basically using the steps, and I'm going to share with you, just tells you anybody can learn this.

And so the quote, the reason, I love that quote is conflict is inevitable, we're going to have it, but combat is optional. You don't have to go into combat every time there is a conflict. So this process that I'm going to share with you, PREP, and we're going to get right to it, but I want to mention it's a structure, it's a model, but it's not perfect. You know, all models are imperfect but most are useful. So today on this call or on this podcast, I'm going to go through with you the steps and they're linear as I walk through them. But life is messy and changes and so you know, every conversation you have and every conflict situation might not go linear like this, it most

likely won't, but if you have the structure and you use it and use it as a framework, it's going to help you one, not avoid having conversations and two the conversations you do have are going to get better and they'll get better and better and better. So having this structure or this model is helpful, but you're going to edit and revise it and you know, have to go off the cuff at times. But I do think again, again that statement, I heard in a long time ago at a conference where somebody said, "All models are imperfect but most are useful," well this fits that category and I hope you'll find it very useful.

So finally, let's go into the four steps. It's the PREP. Step one is P - Plan the conversation, step two R - Review the three reasons, step three E - Emotion check, do an emotion check, step four P - Perfect your listening skills. And so on, during this podcast today, I'll spend most of the time on the two P's, plan the conversation, and perfect your listening skills, that we do have show notes and in the show notes is a worksheet that walks you through PREP. And part of the PREP is planning the conversation. So you're going to want to download that PREP worksheet and you want to, if you'd like, you can download the memory jogger card, which lays the steps out and gives you the detail as a reminder. So the show notes can be found at pricelessprofessional.com/conflict, conflict is lowercase, pricelessprofessional.com/conflict.

So let's go into the first step of PREP and it's the P- Plan conversation. And here's what I want you to think about as you're preparing for this conversation, I want you to think about how you're going to start the conversation, I want you to think about what the problem is, what is the problem you're wanting to talk about? And you need to think about it in a way that's clear and factual and succinct. And that's the hardest part because we sometimes have a lot of emotions around what the problem is, it's like, "Okay, how factual can I be?" And then I want you to think about ideas and for solutions. So think about the scenario that you thought about when I started out today, I asked you to think about a situation that comes to mind and I shared mine with Anne and that I was avoiding having the conversation with her because she wasn't getting some things done that I wanted her to get done, if you look at the master worksheet, pricelessprofessional.com/conflict, you'll see what the steps are. So we're going to open and we're going to plan our open and what I want you to do is have a warm open and the warm open is being sincere, specific, you want it to be appropriate for the situation. So it might be that if you're going to be firing somebody, you're not going to do a lot of warm, but you can still have soft eyes, you could still be, shake their hand, look them eye-to-eye so you can create a different dynamic than coming in the ready for combat just by how you open. And it might be body language or might be if it's a situation like Anne, be something more. And why, why would you do this? Why are you thinking about the warm open and why is, people don't get defensive because of content, they don't usually get mad about what you say, what they get defensive about is they don't know what your intentions are and they make up things when they don't know, especially if there has been tension in the relationship. So let me say that again, people do not get, usually get defensive because of the content of what you're saying, what they tend to get most defensive about is where they think your intentions are. If you get in a situation where someone's becoming defensive, you need to stop talking about the issue and clarify why you're bringing it up so that they understand your motives and they understand what you really want and, you know, your place in the relationship. You want to be sincere, specific, appropriate, you could share your intent. And there's a book that I recommend people read and

it's *Crucial Conversations* and they call creating safety, I think they use different words for it, but it's creating a safe place because people are, if you've asked somebody to come into your office or they know there's been tension, how do you, how are you going to open in a way that meets that criteria appropriate for the situation? If I'm planning for the conversation, I'm going to make some notes about how I'm going to open the conversation and here's an example of what I've written as I'm planning for my Anne's conversation, and it's appropriate to our situations so you would have to pick what's appropriate for yours. But, "Hey Anna, I want you to know how much I appreciate your support over the years. You're always on time, you're patient with customers and I know you care about the team and I want you to know that I really do appreciate that, I don't think I've told you that lately. But I want to talk to you today because there's something that, it's been going on that I'm not sure you're aware of and I want us to talk it out to see if we can get on the same page, you know, I can understand better what's happening and you can understand how it's impacting me. Are you open to talking about that?" So that opening is much better than the regular Suzie who's not monitoring herself open, which is she's really mad or she never says, "Hey, I want to talk to you about a problem." Okay, so that's the opening practice that you're going to plan and you might just make bullet points, I read it out because I wanted you to have an idea. So I'm thinking about, "Hey, I want to appreciate her and I want to tell her, hey this something is going on that I just want to talk to you about and I want us to brainstorm solutions."

The next thing you're going to do is that problem statement, you're going to get and you can't get to solutions if you both don't agree that there's a problem and you don't agree what the problem is. So you've got to get this clear in your mind as to what the problem is and your goal is to get some agreement on the problem. So here's an example, problem statement with Anne and you want to be as factual as possible, "You know, over the past few weeks I have not been getting my messages, client files and status updates as quickly as I need them, last week there were four messages that were days late getting to me and there were three status updates that didn't come. Are you aware of this? And can you shed any light on what's happening?" So I stated what's been going on, those three things haven't been happening and gave some facts about these things, so very factual, so that she knew, I mean that that was true. And then I asked, "Hey, what's going on? What's your view?" So the goal there is for us to have a discussion, that's where out of conflict, better stuff comes, right? Better ideas, because now we're going to begin to understand what's going on, she's going to understand that I need this stuff and that it's bothering me and I can understand why that's been happening.

And so the next step, if you're actually having the conversation, you know, we're going to plan the conversation, but the next step would be for me to ask her, well, we talk about, you know, why it's happening and the next step would be for me to ask her for some ideas for solutions. "Do you have any thoughts of things you could do or maybe things I could do that could solve this?" And then the last step is you get agreement on what's been discussed, "So we decided today that you're going to do A, B, C and I'm going to try a little more of X, Y, Z, or I'm going to do a little more of X, Y, Z, Let's check in next week on Monday and see how it goes." I did an entire podcast on this, it's on the WPSA process and it is the first step in conflict conversations is one, planning the call and then WPSA is once you plan the call on those four steps, Warm open, Problems, Solutions and Agreement, you actually hold the call and you think of that



structure or that model when you're holding the call. So if you want more, an hour of WPSA and what that's about, and a little bit more detail, pricelessprofessional.com/wpsa, and that, it needs to all be in lower case. So you can go there to get more about that. But if you are going to handle conflict effectively, do the first step in PREP, which is plan the conversation, think about the warm open and the problem, that's the biggest and hardest two sections, think about solutions and be ready to ask for agreement on whatever you discuss and close it out that way.

Now let's go to the next step in PREP, which is R, step two, review the three reasons. So you've planned, you've thought about it, now you're doing a little bit more planning, but it has its own step because you're thinking about why are we having this conflict and is it a style difference? Is it that we have different preferences or drivers or interests that are competing against each other? Or do we have bad history? And on the memory jogger card you'll see insights and questions. So what's their communication style? Can I adapt? So in my scenario, Anne is opposite communication style if you use the DISC, I'm a DI and she was SC. So, can I adapt to her style? And on the back of the memory jogger card for PREP, I've got some tips around how to adapt for different styles, you can see that. What's her top motivator and interest? Can I understand it? So I know what mine is. If you take in the motivators or the TriMetrix assessment, you know what yours are and you can start to understand a little bit of what might be driving someone else. Can I understand what they're, what drives her, what her top interests are? And can I use that in the conversation in a way that helps me understand her? And then if there's personal history that's unresolved, is there anything you can say or do? That's more planning, but it's the second step after you've thought about the actual conversation and you think about the person and think about, "Okay, how, what are the, review the three reasons and figure out if there's anything else I can do in the conversation to make, to use the skills, especially if you've taken the TriMetrix assessment to be more effective in the conversation."

So now we're going into, we've talked about the first step, which is P for plan, second step of PREP is to review the three reasons. And we want to review the three reasons because, if you've read any of Stephen Covey's work, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is my all time favorite, he shares in there, "Seek first to understand before you try to be understood." And so you're doing that in your planning and your prep. And it's interesting the first time you do this, you may spend a lot of time in this planning stage and you're looking at the assessments and thinking about, but after awhile it just starts to happen, it becomes, you know, a skill that you own and you have this structure that you've created and this knowledge that you're using and you use it to be more influential with folks and to open up the dialogue and you'll be known as somebody who can, who can help people work through this stuff.

So before we go to the third step, I want to remind you that for the listeners of the Wake Up Eager Workforce, Audible is offering a free audio download with a free 30-day trial to give you the opportunity to check out their service, which I think is really cool. And I mentioned it earlier, I recommend the book *Crucial Conversations* or you could pick one of your favorites, but *Crucial Conversations* is another one of my all time favorites in regard to understanding the dynamics of conflict and how important it is to work through them. And what's cool about their process and *Crucial Conversations* is, it's a really good fit for PREP, I've had a lot of people, once they've gone through this say, "Oh my gosh, this gives the steps for *Crucial Conversations*," and it is a



very literal model that they can use. So back to Audible though, you can try, get the book *Crucial Conversations* for, try it for free by trying out Audible. And if you don't stay with Audible, you still get to keep your book. So to download your free audio book today, go to audibletrial.com/wakeupeagerworkforce. Again, it's audibletrial.com/wakeupeagerworkforce for your free audio book.

Let's go to the third step in PREP, it's the E, the E is check your emotions. And there's an obvious reason for this. If you've ever in an angry moment said and did something you wish you wouldn't have said, especially at work or you've done the hit the send button when you're mad and then said, "Oops, I wish I could recall that." I've had some of those glorious moments. I remember 2000, I think it was 2001, and I had a leader that I was not a big fan of and I can have a little bit of a temper. So I'm one of those, you know, come on too strong, you know, by nature, if I don't work my knowledge and my skills and you manage my blind spots, I can either come on too strong or not saying anything. And this case I came on too strong, she sent something, I was tired, I'd been working a lot of hours, I didn't particularly love her, I got the email and I didn't manage my emotions, I didn't do an emotion check, I marched over to her desk and said what I thought and it was a really lovely moment. Not! So, there's me telling on myself.

The third step is so important, it has its own step and it is the emotion check-in. And what I want you to think about is, you do a check, after I've planned the conversation and I've reviewed the reasons, so I'm getting ready to have the conversation, I do a check-in. And I'm going to HALT if I'm hungry, angry, lonely or tired, HALT, I'm going to do what? Sleep on it. Because we are not in our best form when we're hungry, angry, lonely or tired, everything looks different when you are rested and you're not hungry and you're not angry, you might still be unhappy about something but that is a very different vibe and is very different than angry. If you're lonely, you tend to give in or not do what you need to do or say what you need to say, you're just coming from a needy place and we all have moments like that and we don't ever talk about it, but it's human. So there's nothing wrong with having those emotions, but those emotions, when you're having those times hungry, angry, lonely, or tired are not the time, if you can help it, to have these conversations that are difficult or challenging and you just stop yourself, manage yourself, HALT, sleep on it.

So we've gone through PREP so far, first step, plan, second step, review three reasons, third step, emotion check, HALT, fourth step is an ongoing skill building step, but it is crucial. These are four crucial steps and every one of them matter. So the P, the last P is to perfect your listening skills. So if you listen and you've learned to perfect, that you will have different conversations and different outcomes, than if your tendency is to debate and make other people wrong and to not probe and to not reflect and pay attention to their emotions, if you have negative listening habits, they will impede your ability to effectively handle discipline problems, to effectively handle workplace habit problems, to effectively handle relationship problems to, it's just, it's such a key, crucial skill.

So I talk about listening aggressively and I use that term because listening aggressively is about an action. And I've had people say, "Well, I don't really like that term because it's too, it should

be softer.” And I agree. And as you can call it whatever you want, I just say listening aggressively because I want to get your attention and I want you to realize that it is something that you do in a focused way. And the definition that I have, or at least part of the definition is, if you're listening aggressive, you're focused on hearing in a determined and energetic way. So this is not passive, it takes focus to listen in this way and you have to be determined and your body is in and your ears are open, the distractions are off and you are present. So I want you to think about people who you know, who are really good listeners, maybe from high school, coach, friend, roommate, manager. Is there somebody who does that? They're present with you; they've been present with you, they ask and when they ask they hear, they're really listening, they're with you, they're present. And I wanted to ask you, what impact does that kind of listening have on you?

When I think about people in my life who have been or are good listeners, I've got two really good friends, one has passed away, but two really good friends that demonstrated that to me early on. My husband is really good at that and I had a boss that was really good at that. How did it impact me when they listened to me this way? I feel understood, I feel supported, I feel loyal to them and that kind of listening helps me be less defensive, helps me move forward, helps us to have really interesting and meaningful, truthful conversations and so if you think about the people in your life who do that for you, that's what you want to mirror. They are your mentors. And if you're not sure or haven't had people in your life, because a lot of people are not very good listeners, it's pretty epidemic in the world that we live in today, so don't worry because I've got some steps for you and you can practice it and you can get better at it, but what are you actually doing? Some things that they do and that I now have learned to do for myself and I work on on a regular basis is they don't interrupt, they give you their full attention, they ask probing questions, they seem to understand because they've listened, even if they don't agree, they listen and then they tell me what they think. That is listening aggressively. They create safety; they create an environment where I want to be honest, because I know it'll be okay. Even if they disagree with me, they acknowledging the emotions, they don't try to suppress, their present, they're tuned in.

So I have done a podcast around presence, and I'll mention that here it is podcast number 25 and it talks about what is, I talked with someone who teaches relational presence. What is that? If you go to pricelessprofessional.com/presence, p-r-e-s-e-n-c-e, presence, you can listen to that podcast and it talks about what does it mean to fully be with someone. And some of that work around relational presence has helped me unlock my ability to do that. So now I'm, I can feel myself when I slip into being more present with people and it is a conscious choice and it's a skill. You know, why does this matter so much in conflict? Well, people want to be heard and if people are heard and feel understood and they get the attention, even if the other person disagrees or there has been lots of history, defenses go down and solutions can emerge. So it's that Executive that I talked about who said at the end of our facilitated conflict resolution, first together session with the person he was in conflict with, when he said, “I feel so much better.” Part of that process was him being able to say what he really thought and for the other person to listen. So being heard, giving attention, even if you disagree, is, it does wonders for resolving conflict; it's human that we want this. So when I shared the definition of listening aggressively, I said the first part, which is, it means you're focused on hearing in a determined and energetic

way. Well, the rest of the definition is, and I'll have this in the show notes at pricelessprofessional.com/conflict, "When you're doing it well, you demonstrate your desire to understand by asking questions and listening with no agenda other than to understand."

So I want to go through a couple of negative listening habits and I'll give you the, it's an article that I wrote around a little quiz and there are six negative listening habits and they are the opposite of perfecting your listening skills. And we all have a tendency to do one or more of these. So I'm gonna share them with you. And as you're listening to the six types of negative listening habits, I want you to think about, "Oops, that's me. I do that up. Sometimes that's me or nope, I never do that." And there are six of them. One is called the Faker. The next is Interrupter, the Happy Hooker, the Advice Giver, Rebuttal Maker and Intellectual or Logical Listener.

So let's go through it and see, rate yourself is it, "Oops, that's me, sometimes that's me, or never me. Faker, all the outward signs are there, they're nodding, making eye contact, giving the occasional, "Uh huh," however, the Faker isn't concentrating on the speaker, his mind is elsewhere. Is that you? Here's another negative listening habit. The Interrupter, the Interrupter doesn't allow the speaker to finish, doesn't ask clarifying questions or seek more information from the speaker. He's too anxious to speak his words and shows little concern for the speaker. Could that be you sometimes? All of these, if you think about them in the context of conflict, are going to elevate the conflict, not comment, it's not going to give the person this feeling like they're understood and that you're with them and you are listening. All right, the next negative listening habit, the Happy Hooker, the Happy Hooker uses a speaker's words only as a way to get his message, get to his message. When the speaker says something, and frankly it could be anything, the Happy Hooker steals the focus and then changes to his own point of view, opinion, story, or facts. Favorite Hooker lines are, "Oh, that's nothing, here's what happened to me, I remember when I was," could that be you sometimes? Fourth negative listening habit, the Advice Giver, this is one that's prevalent because we, it's disguised because we think, "Okay, I'm giving advice, so that must be a good thing, right?" So giving advice is sometimes helpful, however, at other times, this behavior interferes with good listening. It doesn't allow the speaker to fully articulate his feelings or thoughts, it doesn't help the speaker solve problems, it prohibits venting, could also belittle the speaker by minimizing a concern with a quick solution. Well-placed advices and important function in selling and leading, however, advice given too quickly and at the wrong time is a turnoff. Alright, the fifth, the Rebuttal Maker. This listener only listens long enough to form a rebuttal. His point is to use the speaker's words against him, at his worst he's argumentative and wants to prove you wrong. At the least, this person always wants to make the speaker see his point of view. Oops, that's me, sometimes that's me, never me? The reason this one is so negative, extra negative in a conflict situation is you've got to be able to listen without an agenda in the moment. If you've listed the problem and planned like I'm recommending, and then you have some ideas of solutions, then you can, you should be able to open up and just listen without trying to make that person wrong. And in the place of doing that, you're going to have a better discussion, you're going to get some agreement on the problem, and you'll move to some solutions together that there's buy in to around the solutions, I mean, sometimes, yes, you need to dictate, this is what we're going to do, but if you do that all the time, you won't get buy in, people will say yes and they'll mean no. And last negative listening

habit is the Intellectual or Logical Listener. This person always tries to interpret what the speaker is saying and why, he's judging the speaker's words and trying to fit them into his logic box. He rarely asks about the underlying feeling or emotion attached to a message. So, oops, that's me, sometimes that's me, that's never me? You can find these if you would like to look at them again in more detail or have somebody else take the little quiz, it's on a blog post that I did, pricelessprofessional.com/negativelistening. So do you have the habit, negative listening habit of being a Faker, the Interrupter, the Happy Hooker, the Advice Giver, Rebuttal Maker, the Intellectual or Logical Listener? All of those are going to impede your ability to have effective course correction or conflict resolution conversations. Sometimes that's why it's good to have a facilitator when you have two people having conflict because you don't, the facilitator usually doesn't have any stake in the game and they can help people be listeners by setting up guidelines. So you can do that as the leader on your team if you have two people who are in conflict, you can use this PREP conversation model and I'll put in the show notes, I've got a video that I did many years ago or handful of years ago at least, around a conflict situation where it was between two Executives and what happened and it's essentially the same model, but with the leader or the facilitator having each person share. So I'll make sure I put that in the show notes.

I saw an article this year from the Wall Street Journal, which is my favorite paper; I like to read it every morning. And it was an article, the title was, "Why You Should Never Tell Someone to Relax, Why You Should Never Tell Someone to Relax." You think, "Okay, just relax," seems like you're being helpful, right? That's a little bit of the Advice Giver and it's a little bit of the Intellectual or Logical Listener where you're not acknowledging the emotions. And here's what they say you ought to do to help people who are stressed out, and it ties into this whole conflict or tension dialogue. Here's the, quoting from the article, "It's a paradoxical fact, when someone is getting stressed out, one of the least effective and perhaps most annoying things to say is relax. This directive has exactly the opposite effect on most people. People who instruct a colleague, subordinate or loved one to relax, may have good intentions, but it's usually better to resist ordering people to change their emotional state and try a different strategy, to help calm someone who is stressed acknowledged his or her feelings first." So acknowledge the feelings first. And that's part of this listening aggressively process that I'm going to line out for you and I have also another podcast that covers this as well. But anyway, to calm someone who is stressed, acknowledge his or her feelings first. So tonight, when you go home and one of your children are unhappy or upset or your spouse is unhappy or upset, just acknowledge their feelings by saying something like, "Wow, it looks like you've had a tough day." Show empathy, ask open-ended questions such as, "Tell me what's going on?" Give the person a chance to talk about his or her feelings. And depending on their personality style, they may do it in a factual way, they may do it in a very expressive way. But if you probe, you know gently, "Tell me what's going on? How are you, sounds like you've had a tough day?" That's all you have to say. And it gives, people a chance to express how they're feeling, what they're thinking. If we say relax, and here's back to the article now, "Other research shows that trying to hide or suppress an emotion called emotion suppression typically backfires, when people are told to hide how they feel and try to clamp down on the emotion, it actually leaks out more." Isn't that interesting? So when you tell someone at work, "Hey, we are at work, right? We do have a business, but you know, we don't leave our emotions at the door when we walk in." Hence the reason why we do an

Emotional IQ type assessments with TriMetrix now, and about trying to understand emotions and just getting better and better at how to work with those in the workplace. There's gotta be some appropriate venue and it could be as simple as you just listening for a short period of time and saying, "Tell me what's going on," or acknowledging how they're feeling.

So I'm going to go through the four steps of listening aggressively. I'll go through them quickly and I'm going to use the example of Anne. I'm in a conversation with Anne, our Administrator from a jillion years ago, who I was having a conflict with. But I want to mention that I have a podcast that talks about these listening. Not only is it an important part of the four crucial steps in conflict resolution, PREP, it's a part of the four skills best bosses have mastered. And I did a podcast on that, it is podcast number 13, pricelessprofessional.com/bestboss. So here it is, going through listening aggressively with Anne and there's four steps. You know me, the acronym Queen, right? Our PSA. So Anne and I are talking and I've told her a little bit about the problem and saying, "You know, I'm not getting my emails, my status updates, tell me about your view?" And she talks to me about it. So I'm going to reflect her emotions back to her. And I'm going to say that's the first step in listening aggressively, "Sounds like you feel frustrated and stressed about your workload and how it's gone up, gotten extra work from another department. Right?" So that's reflecting, I've acknowledged and repeated what she has said and I have acknowledged, you know, cause she says to me, "You know I've got too much work, blah, blah, blah." So I reflect. And then I'm going to probe and that is to ask clarifying questions, "Will this extra work from the other department continue? How long do you think that will be? What have you tried?" So you just ask a lot of questions so that you can understand what's going on. So I'm going to reflect, if I'm listening aggressively before I say, "Well Anne, just get over it man, you need to do my work, that's what you're hired for," that is not going to help us resolve the conflict. She may get mad and I may have said what I needed to say, but it is not getting good any better. So I'm going to reflect and acknowledge her emotions, I'm going to probe so that I can understand, I'm going to support, that's our P, S, support. And I may say something like, "Wow, it seems really challenging to try to juggle all of this, made your everyday job harder." I've tried to think of the TV show, it's a sitcom, where there was Charlie and two men, Two, I can't think of the show now, Two Men and a Kid? Anyway, and he was trying to be a better listener and he kept saying, "Well I understand." And all these women were falling over their feet on, at his feet, because he was saying, "Well, I understand." And that's a little bit about what supporting is, is saying, "I understand. I, you know, I understand that this is hard. I understand that. I get it." You know? "Wow." It's an understanding. And then the last step is advising. So there you hold off saying, "You know, we've got to get this fixed. We've got to, you've got to do this. I paid you to do this, this is what you need to do." So the advising is after you've done some reflecting, you've done some probing, so you can understand and you've expressed sincere support. And once you start to understand what's really going on, it's easy to be supportive, even if you disagree. And then the next, the last is advising. And so in this case, because she didn't report directly to me, she just worked for me and five other people, plus our manager, I said, "Let's talk about what we can do together to make sure that the message is files and status updates happen." "It's important," I'm advising, "It's important for our clients. I mean, we have to have this piece because that's why I'm upset about it a little bit. And so, you know, what are some things you can do? And let's see if there's other things that I can do that makes sense." So that's the advising part, a little bit of an example with Anne situation.



I've gotten pretty good, I'm decent at this now, pretty good, at work it's easier, sometimes in my personal life I'll go straight into advising because I have strong opinions. But in work situations it's hard for me to, sometimes now because I've practiced this so much, to just spit out, "This is what I think you ought to do," unless I'm under stress, normally I will not do that. I'm always wanting to, because there is so much value in building the relationship and using these steps to better understand what's really going on, because we spout off advice, that's that Advice Giver, negative listening habit thing, that's not really applicable to the person because we don't fully understand the situation and if we spout off advice before they feel like we've heard them, we've acknowledged their emotions, we're on their side, even if we disagree, then the advice isn't helpful anyway, they're not even going to hear it. So listening aggressively, that is step four in PREP. And here's another one of my favorite quotes and it's, "The greatest compliment that was ever paid to me was when one asks me what I thought and attended to my answer." And that's from Through, it is the power of listening aggressively. It is a compliment when we listen and we ask and then we attend to the situation.

To recap this podcast today, we've talked about the impact of conflict. It's around us all day, every day in the work world, many hours, much money is spent wasted on unresolved conflict. I've given you one model. It's an imperfect model but it's very useful and it is a structure that you can use to handle conflict more effectively. We've talked about the four steps. First step is P - Plan. I use the WPSA, which is a Warm open, Problems, Solutions and Advising as a conversation format or structure and for you to plan prior to via that structure. Talked about the next step, which is R for Review and that is the three reasons why we have conflict. Talked about the third step, Emotion, doing any emotion check-in and we're going to HALT for Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired, we are going to sleep on it. And then the fourth step is to perfect our listening skills.

Now I have, as I've mentioned a couple times, I'll say it one more time, I have a memory jogger card with all of this on it, that now that you've listened to the podcast and you can use it and the worksheet to have your next conversation. So when are you going to use this, want you think about that. If you have questions or comments about this model, you can reach out to me at suzie@pricelessprofessional.com and you can leave me a note on my website or you can share this content via your, via the website and download our app at pricelessprofessional.com/conflict. I'm going to share a link on the show notes page about a Ted Talk. And it is a powerful Ted Talk that might, I'll do it, I'll use it in my newsletter this month as well, because I'm going to focus on conflict resolution in my newsletter this month and this month is June, 2017, but Megan Phillips Phelps Rogers shares how she learned to communicate with people who have different viewpoints. She, and she was in an extreme situation and it's a perfect marriage to this conversation that you and I are having today and it's something that I think all leaders could benefit from watching and it's, you know, with help you get better at feedback at conflict. It backs up what we've talked about today. Other people agree that it's a powerful story because she's gotten more than 2 million views. And the net of it, I'll give you a quick summary is, Megan the speaker in the Ted Talk; she grew up in this cult like environment. She had 10 siblings and all the siblings were taught to go out and protest against everybody that wasn't like them. So at five years old, when she was five years old, she had picketing signs and was against everything that was not a part of her church. You know, that's



extreme, when you've got ideology, you know, what do you not talk about with others? Religion, politics and sex is what they say, right? Well she had the religion part, and you know, she was taught to disagree and be in conflict with everybody who had a different idea. And she talks about how she changed and she gives some simple tips around learning, how she learned to see others as human beings. And it's riveting. Her delivery style is riveting as well. She's very calm and very self-possessed and how she moved from, it's not us versus them, which is incredible that she was able to do it after being indoctrinated at such a young age. At the end, she says some things that marry well with the PREP conflict resolution process. And she says, basically, don't assume bad intent, ask questions, stay calm and make the argument. So there's a lot of wisdom in her talk and within her story. And I'll put a link to that in the show notes at pricelessprofessional.com/conflict.

If this episode has been helpful to you, if you have the app, there's an easy place there when you can share, you can leave us a review on iTunes, it helps other people find us. That would be way cool. And I would be really thankful for you, to you, on that. And you can download the app if you go to pricelessprofessional.com/conflict or you can go to wakeupeagerworkforce.com and you can see all the episodes, we're now on episode number 35.

I'm excited about the next episodes I'm going to be doing, I'm going to be interviewing a very dynamic person, Jeff Gray from NovaLogic who is a culture agency. And they taught, we're going to talk about culture shaping, and he's doing some amazing work. And he's a great storyteller, so I'm excited to share him with you. That's coming up. I'm getting ready to get that booked now and I've gotten certified in Executive Presence, the Executive Presence Index, and it's about helping leaders measure, especially at the Senior to Executive level, how well they're doing and care in character, substance and style as an Executive, how they're perceived. And I'm going to have to have those experts interview with me, there are two of the people that were part of my training in the process. So, they're also, I just feel like they're really smart and dynamic and passionate about this subject of presence, and Executive Presence, how to be more influential and make a difference in your business and in the world and in other's lives. So I'm excited to bring that to you. So we'll be bringing that to you here as soon as possible those will probably be the next couple episodes, so stay tuned.

Connect with me on Twitter; it's @wakeupeager. Connect with me on LinkedIn; it's Suzie Price S-U-Z-I-E, P-R-I-C-E. Connect with me on Facebook, just type in facebook.com/wakeupeager. I do a little bit on each of those social media areas or you shoot me an email, suzie@pricelessprofessional.com. Until we meet again, God bless you and we'll talk soon. Take care.

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