

Dealing with Difficult Elected Public Officials & Conflictual Conversation

With insights from

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most (D. Stone et.al., 1999).

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When Physical Violence & Public Humiliation Is Not an Option



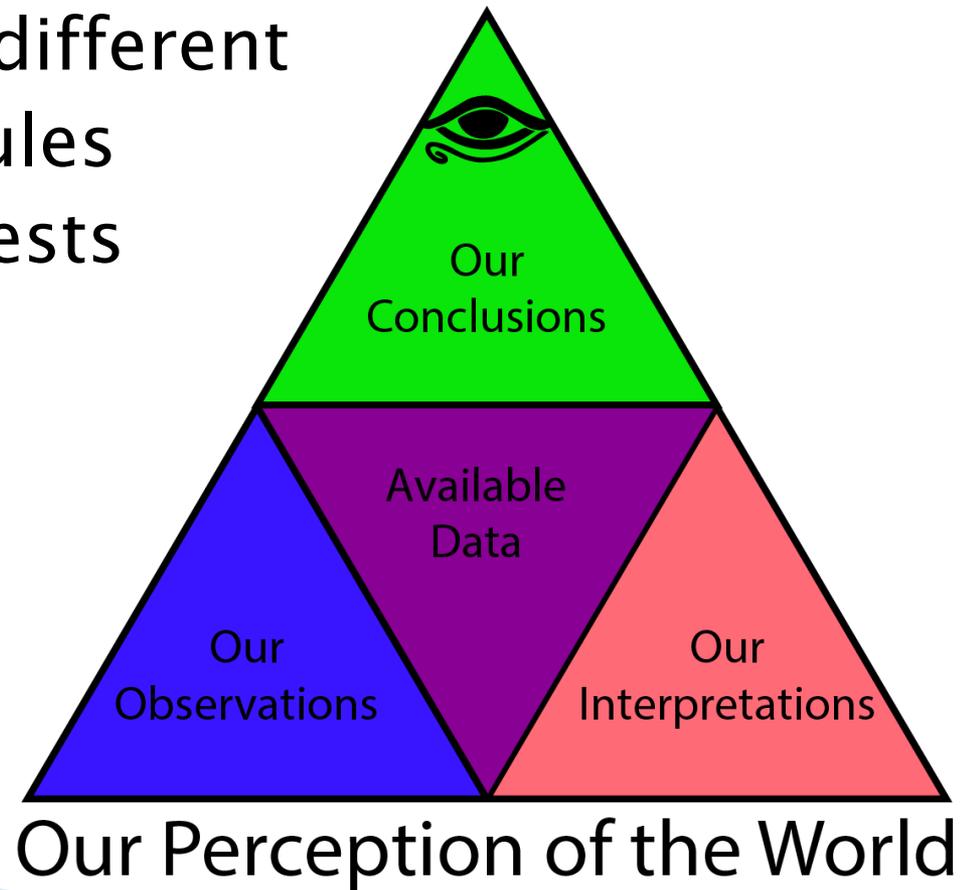
What makes one “difficult?”



You're Both Right

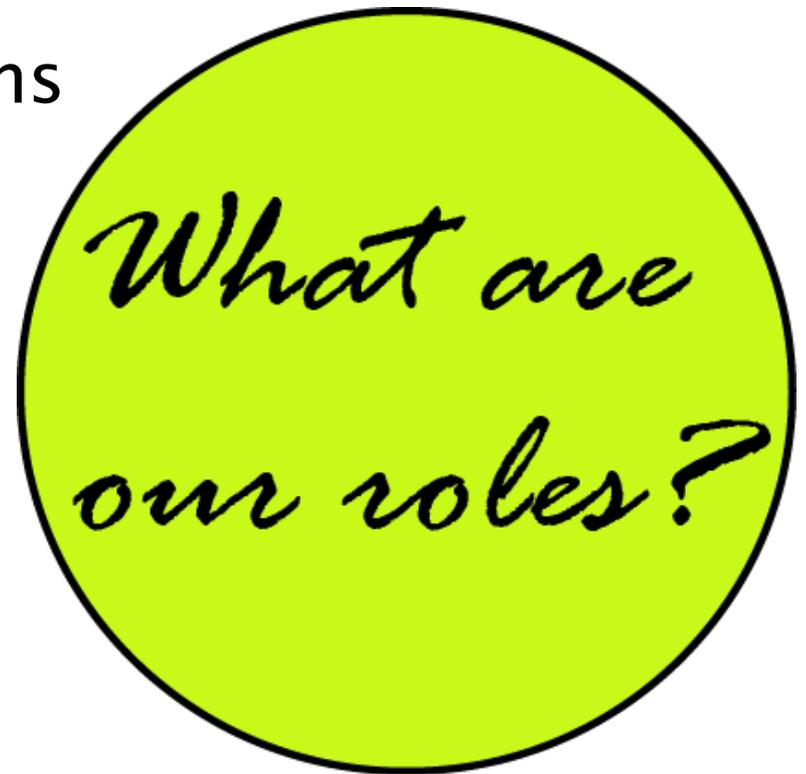
So don't be frustrated when they're wrong.

- ▶ We see things differently
- ▶ Our experiences are different
- ▶ We follow different rules
- ▶ We all have self interests



Recognize Roles

- ▶ What is required?
- ▶ What is expected?
- ▶ What are the contributions we each provide?



Feelings Matter

- ▶ Judgment
 - Assign a “good” or “bad” label
- ▶ Blame
 - Attribute intent and fault
- ▶ Characterization
 - Assume it is a reflection of who they are personally
- ▶ Problem–Solving
 - Determine what actions the other needs to take to make things right



Threats to Your Identity

- ▶ Three Core Identity Issues:
 - I am Competent
 - I am a Good Person
 - I am Worthy
- ▶ It's not an “all or nothing” proposition



Don't Assume Intent

- ▶ We assume intentions based how actions impact us.
- ▶ We assume the worst in others' intentions
- ▶ We are defensive when others assume the worst in our intentions



Questions to Understanding

1. What is their perspective? What have they got to go on?
 2. What is their goal and what is my goal?
 3. Do we have the same audience?
 4. What are our respective roles?
 5. How does their actions make me feel?
 6. Are their actions affecting my sense of identity?
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Having the Difficult Conversation



Third Story

- ▶ Not Right/Wrong, Not Better/Worse – **Different**
- ▶ Remove judgment
- ▶ Think as a neutral 3rd party

*There are Three Sides to Every Story
Mine, Yours and the Truth*



Extend an Invitation

- ▶ Describe your purpose
- ▶ Invite (don't impose)
- ▶ Make them a partner in resolving the issue



Discussion

