

FLIP script

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Words are powerful. Even with the best intentions, we can say or do things that shut down dialogue before it gets started. It's especially easy to do this when the topic is sensitive, controversial, or provocative. But we need to have these tough conversations to understand and bridge differences¹ and successfully collaborate in teams.² Create opportunities for connections by using words that invite different perspectives and help people feel heard and valued.³

**CREATE CONNECTIONS, NOT CONFLICT,
IN TOUGH CONVERSATIONS**

UNSUPPORTIVE ←

→ SUPPORTIVE

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"IF YOU DON'T
HAVE SOMETHING
NICE TO SAY,
DON'T SAY IT
AT ALL."

HOW IT'S UNSUPPORTIVE
Shuts down a conversation. Doesn't allow for disagreement or the safety to call out others' missteps.⁴ Makes it difficult to give honest feedback that can help others learn.

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"I want to hear what you have to say, even if it may be difficult."

Be **SUPPORTIVE** of tough conversations by encouraging honesty and transparency, even when what is being shared may be challenging to hear.

NOT CURIOUS ←

→ CURIOUS

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"I'VE HEARD
THIS ALREADY."

HOW IT'S NOT CURIOUS
Sounds dismissive. Can be hurtful to suggest that your colleagues' feelings, perspectives, or experiences do not deserve to be heard.⁵ Implies that you think you know it all and can't possibly have more to learn.

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"This is what I know... Help me understand what I may be missing or getting wrong."

Show **CURIOSITY** by asking questions, being open to new or different perspectives, and being willing to go beyond what is familiar or comfortable. Listening to and acknowledging the emotions of others lets them know you are interested in their experiences.⁶

NOT HUMBLE ←

→ HUMBLE

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"OH NO, HERE WE
GO AGAIN."

HOW IT'S NOT HUMBLE
Puts the speaker on the defensive and closes the opportunity for open dialogue.⁷ Assumes you know what someone will say before you've taken the time to actually listen to them.

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"It sounds like you have a strong point of view. Help me understand how you see this issue."

Demonstrate **HUMILITY** by accepting that your views may be incomplete and showing your willingness to hear other points of view.

NOT EMPATHIC ←

→ EMPATHIC

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"THAT HAPPENS TO ME, AND YOU DON'T HEAR ME COMPLAINING."

HOW IT'S NOT EMPATHIC
Downplays the challenges people face. Suggests their feelings and perspectives are not valid, creating an "empathy gap."⁸ Signals that you are unwilling to see the difference between your own experiences and those of others.⁹

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"I think I face something similar, but it sounds like it impacts you differently. Tell me more about why it affects you that way."

Express **EMPATHY** by showing that you understand and appreciate another point of view or experience. Actively listen to the meaning of others' words to deepen your understanding of their perspectives.

NOT COURAGEOUS ←

→ COURAGEOUS

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"THERE'S NO POINT IN TALKING ABOUT THIS."

HOW IT'S NOT COURAGEOUS
Sends a message that you are unwilling to engage in dialogue.¹⁰ Suggests that the goal of understanding each other better is not worthwhile, when, in fact, it can help build inclusion.¹¹

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"To make real change, we have to understand each other. That takes talking and, importantly, listening to each other, to bridge our differences. Let's start there."

Communicate **COURAGEOUSLY** by acknowledging that talking about some topics is challenging but that you are open to doing so, even when difficult. Demonstrate that it is safe to bring sensitive issues up with you.

UNACCOUNTABLE ←

→ ACCOUNTABLE

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"I'M NOT SEXIST, BUT...."

HOW IT'S UNACCOUNTABLE
Opening the statement with denial shuts down candid conversations and says that you are unwilling to explore your potential blind spots.¹²

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
"I acknowledge that I have biases that may be bubbling up here. I'd like to have a courageous and honest conversation to help me uncover my blind spots or see things from a different perspective."

Demonstrate **ACCOUNTABILITY** by taking responsibility for how your words and actions affect those around you. Invite feedback to learn how your impact might be different from what you intended.¹³

BE OPEN

Start with an open mind, and invite conversations by asking questions. Respect and affirm your colleagues' views, even if you disagree or their views are different from your own.

LEAD WITH INTENTION

Use your words and actions to purposefully create different opportunities for dialogue. Rethink the "I tried once, and it did not work..." mindset—it takes time to build trust and connection. Continue to assume positive intent.

ROLE MODEL

Inspire others to connect across divides through your example. Seek to learn, even in tough situations, and encourage others to do the same.

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CATALYST
WORKPLACES THAT WORK FOR WOMEN

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