

# Jane Gunn



International Mediator, Author and Keynote Speaker – *'Transformer of Conversations Businesses and Lives'*

## Building a Better Business Culture

### Thought For the Day

“ Whatever is unspoken is hardest to change”

“We speak least about the things that matter most”

### Tomorrow's Company

In the early 1990's Professor Charles Handy challenged a group of business leaders to help him discover the critical factors that would identify “Tomorrow's Company”. An inquiry called Tomorrow's Company followed and one of the key findings was that **the adversarial approach to relationships** is one of the key behaviours preventing companies from performing at their optimum level.

### Acceptance and Active Management of Conflict

2 abilities have the most impact on the longevity and success of a business

1. Strategic Planning
2. Acceptance and active management of conflict

Harvard Business Review article by Jeff Weiss and Jonathan Hughes

Al Siebert wrote a book called “The Survivor Personality”. A Portland resident who happens to be a psychologist, he has studied what it takes for individuals and organisations to survive potentially disastrous events. He suggests that there are many important lessons to be learnt from natural disasters

- We will DENY DANGER or potential disruption if it is inconvenient
- DISBELIEF PREVAILS over reality – even when there are warning signs, most people will dismiss a threat if it has never happened before
- Even when people know that problems might occur, they SELDOM MAKE PLANS for dealing with them until they do

So have a strategy for managing conflict:

- Expect it
- Acknowledge it
- Plan for it

## What is Conflict?

Conflict is the PROCESS of expressing unhappiness

Dispute is the PRODUCT of unresolved conflict

SIGNS and SIGNALS

- Silence
- Talking behind someone's back
- Withholding information
- Sabotage
- Fighting – physical or verbal

If not caught early it ESCALATES

Conflict is like WATER if you capture and channel it early it ADDS VALUE rather than CREATE WASTE

COST of conflict

- DIRECT – expert fees etc.
- PRODUCTIVITY + lost opportunity costs
- RELATIONAL
- HEALTH

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION = expansion of ENERGY and PRODUCTIVITY

SYNERGY – need for things to work out well for SELF + OTHERS

## Window of Opportunity

A *window of opportunity* exists from the moment that we or others begin to feel unhappy about the way someone is behaving or the way in which a situation is unfolding.



Conflict = Process of expressing dissatisfaction

Dispute = Product of unresolved conflict

## Why Conflict and Collaboration Go Together

Getting collaboration right promises tremendous benefits but also presents great challenges. Most organisations respond to the challenge of improving collaboration in entirely the wrong way.

The fact is, you cannot improve collaboration until you have accepted and actively managed conflict.

Conflicts challenge us throughout our lives to figure out how to live in a world with DIFFERENCE. How to balance who we are with who we want to be, with who others are, what they want and how they act towards us.

Conflicts are the junctures where we interact with others who are DIFFERENT from us and who may CHALLENGE our goals and expectations, violate our sense of fair play, attempt to control or limit our perceived potential etc.

#### 4 Cs of Collaboration

Every social interaction or conversation that we have will sit somewhere along the continuum of threat to reward – prompting either an **adversarial or collaborative response**

##### ○ CONNECTION

Feeling equal/better than another – “in” or “out” of a social group

Threat response may be triggered by:

- Giving advice or instructions
- Suggesting less effective
- Offering “feedback”

##### ○ CONSIDERATION

A sense of fairness – respect + courtesy

Threat response may be triggered by:

- Perception of unfair dealing or behaviour
- Perception of rudeness or discourtesy
- Perception of giving less time, value + commitment

##### ○ CONTROL

A sense of certainty about outcomes + future

Threat response may be triggered by:

- Uncertainty about future
- Lack of clarity about expectations
- Perception of being unable to control events

##### ○ CARING

A sense of being valued and cared about

Threat response may be triggered by:

- Perception others don't care about your needs
- Feeling of not being listened to

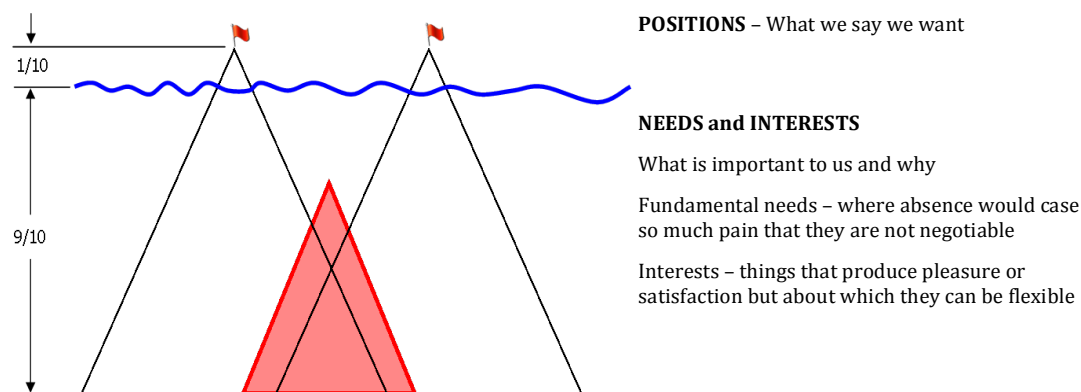
## Listening

People don't say what they THINK or Feel until it's too late

“Whatever is unspoken is hardest to change”

“We talk least about the things that matter most”

P. I. N. Model - Positions – Interests – Needs



The ‘Iceberg’ Model – like an iceberg 9/10 of important information is hidden

No-one tries to misinterpret or misunderstand – we simply interpret according to the framework or world view within which we are operating

When someone is listening or supposed to be listening to US what they actually pay close attention to is the things that directly CONCERN THEM – things that are relevant to THEIR OWN situation, to their interests, needs, fears and concerns

SEEK TO UNDERSTAND before you seek to be understood

LISTEN for and ACKNOWLEDGE other's needs, interests, fears and concerns

*“The greatest mistake we humans make in our relationships*

*We listen half, understand a quarter*

*Think zero, react DOUBLE”*

## Assumptions and Inferences

Teaching of listening skills is often restricted to summarising of the facts, to body language i.e. making eye contact, nodding, posture etc. and to acknowledging emotion. What is not taught however is how we should identify *what is going on inside us while we are listening* and the impact that has on the process.

Most people tend to filter what the other person is actually communicating to them and to make their own assumptions and inferences about what that means and in a way that it fits their own world view.

For example, when someone else is speaking, we often have a stream of thoughts and feelings where we create our own interpretation of what is being communicated and what it means.

Try this exercise. Think of a recent conversation that you can recall in detail. In the left hand column write down the conversation as you remember it. Then in the middle column write down your own thoughts, feelings and observations.

Now become aware of any inferences and assumptions you may have been making about what was actually being communicated or about the other person's values or motives etc. Write these down in the right hand column.

THE CONVERSATION	MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND OBSERVATIONS	ASSUMPTIONS AND INFERENCES
<i>Tony</i> <i>"I think it would be much better if we didn't invite Juliet to join us for the end of term lunch as she's retiring anyway"</i>	<i>He's just thinking about himself</i> <i>I saw him look away when he said that</i>	That Tony is motivated by self-interest That Tony is embarrassed

It is important to realise that we can only *know* how someone feels and what they think if they have actually told us. Otherwise we can only *assume* that we know what they are thinking and feeling and make *inferences* from clues and signals such as body language, tone of voice etc.

In the same way, another person can only *know* how we are feeling and what we are thinking if we are able to tell them otherwise, they will make assumptions and inferences, which may well be wrong.

You can probably see how easy it is for people to misinterpret each other.

### Challenges and Assumptions

Having the self-awareness to realise that your own thoughts and feelings can lead you to misunderstand what the other person is trying to communicate is one important step but how then do you discover what was really intended?

The answer is to check back with the other person and to test or challenge your assumptions.

This is not as easy as it sounds as there is always the possibility that you will offend the other person by suggesting thoughts and feelings, motives and values in a way that causes offence.

Let's look again at the conversation above.

THE CONVERSATION	MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND OBSERVATIONS	ASSUMPTIONS AND INFERENCES
<i>Tony</i> <i>"I think it would be much better if we didn't invite Juliet to join us for the end of term lunch as she's retiring anyway"</i>	<i>He's just thinking about himself</i> <i>I saw him look away when he said that</i>	That Tony is motivated by self-interest That Tony is embarrassed

CHALLENGE 1	CHALLENGE 2	
<p><i>"You're just thinking about yourself Tony. I saw you look away and it's obvious that you are embarrassed and so you should be!"</i></p>	<p><i>"Tony when I heard you suggest that we should not invite Juliet to the end of term lunch I felt quite puzzled and also a little annoyed. I wondered if the reason you made that suggestion was because you felt Juliet might feel left out as we all discuss our plans for the new term. Is that correct or am I off track there?"</i></p>	

What's the key difference between Challenge 1 and Challenge 2?

Challenge 1 comes across more as an attack on Tony and his reaction is likely to be to get angry and defend himself rather than to enter into a constructive discussion about the merits or not of inviting Juliet to the lunch.

Change 2 on the other hand, communicates to Tony how the *listener felt* in response to what he said and instead of assuming the worst possible motives and leaving Tony to deny and defend himself, gives him the opportunity to discuss what he was really thinking and feeling.

### Focusing on the Other Person

True listening is a very courageous act because it involves seriously entertaining the ideas, values, perceptions of the other person and putting your own ideas and instinctive responses on hold while you do so.

Next time you have a disagreement with someone, instead of trying to make them see your point of view, try and adopt an attitude of *total curiosity* and focus all your energy on really trying to understand WHY they believe what they do.

To do this from a place of *curiosity* "I wonder what makes him think that way?" rather than one of *superiority* i.e. "I'm right and you're wrong" is the best approach but one that takes a great deal of caring and patience.

Good listening and conversation is at the heart of every successful relationship and poor listening and conversation is the root of many relationship breakdowns and the basis of most conflicts and disputes,

*We cannot find personal intimacy without listening. When we are listening, we are offering the other person the gift of understanding and acceptance (not agreement) – the gift of taking that person seriously.*

### How to Deal with Difficult Conversation

Try to see differences as OPPORTUNITIES for learning

Seek to UNDERSTAND before you seek to be understood

Be aware of parallel conversations – in your head you will be making ASSUMPTIONS and JUDGEMENTS and having THOUGHTS and FEELINGS that you do not share or check out with the other person

I feel as I do because I am telling myself THOUGHTS about the other person's ACTIONS that imply WRONGNESS on their part

If a person has a PERCEPTION that his needs, interests, fears and concerns HAVE been HEARD, ACKNOWLEDGED and UNDERSTOOD then he/she will sense that he/she does MATTER and has BEEN HEARD

When this happens the person is much more likely to co-operate or collaborate with you in resolving the problem

If a person has a PERCEPTION that his needs, interests, fears and concerns have NOT been HEARD, ACKNOWLEDGED and UNDERSTOOD then he/she will sense that he/she does NOT MATTER and HAS NOT been heard.

When this happens they may sabotage any attempts to resolve the problem

It's better to talk about things that upset us and confront them

Every conflict begs the question "Do I DARE to raise this issue"

Do I need to gain some insight into the REAL ISSUE?

- What conversations are we HAVING?
- What conversations are we NOT HAVING?

### **1. LISTEN FIRST (Seek to Understand)**

- REFLECT
- EMPATHISE
- CHECK

No JUDGEMENT

No ASSUMPTIONS

ACKNOWLEDGE – Needs, Interests, Fears and Concerns

Creates EMPOWERMENT and RECOGNITION

### **2. SEEK TO BE UNDERSTOOD (Without violence or aggression)**

- Use 'I' NOT 'You'
- Share THOUGHTS and FEELINGS
- Say what you NEED
- Explain REASONING

Say what you SAW/HEARD + CHECK MEANING

"I think I saw/heard..... did I miss something?"

Share THOUGHTS and FEELINGS

“I’m thinking .....what do you think”

Explain REASONING

“The reason I’m saying/asking this is because.....”

Say what you NEED

“I need to be able to .....”

Agree on WAY FORWARD

“I think it would be helpful to ..... What do you think?”

### **Book List**

How to Beat Bedlam in the Boardroom and Boredom in the Bedroom - by Jane Gunn

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Beat-Bedlam-Boardroom-Boredom-Bedroom-ebook/dp/B007MOIL9Y/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1477497157&sr=8-1&keywords=how+to+beat+bedlam+in+the+boardroom+and+boredom+in+the+bedroom](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Beat-Bedlam-Boardroom-Boredom-Bedroom-ebook/dp/B007MOIL9Y/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1477497157&sr=8-1&keywords=how+to+beat+bedlam+in+the+boardroom+and+boredom+in+the+bedroom)

The Survivor Personality – by Al Siebert

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Survivor-Personality-Bernie-M-D-Siegel/dp/0399535926/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484047&sr=8-1&keywords=the+survivor+personality](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Survivor-Personality-Bernie-M-D-Siegel/dp/0399535926/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484047&sr=8-1&keywords=the+survivor+personality)

The Seven-Day Weekend – by Ricardo Semler

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Seven-Day-Weekend-Better-Work-Century/dp/0099425238/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484135&sr=8-1&keywords=the+seven-day+weekend](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Seven-Day-Weekend-Better-Work-Century/dp/0099425238/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484135&sr=8-1&keywords=the+seven-day+weekend)

See also - Ricardo Semler Won't Take Control

<http://www.strategy-business.com/article/05408?gko=3291c>

Reinventing Organisations – by Frederic Laloux

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/2960133501/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484234&sr=8-1&keywords=reinventing+organisations](http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/2960133501/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1441484234&sr=8-1&keywords=reinventing+organisations)

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