1. Participate in a Critical Friends discussion: be prepared to report back.
2. Find a book to read that matches your growth interests.
3. Create a **ONE MINUTE or shorter** elevator pitch for your unit, connected to its purpose and mission.

**Homework**

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**Managing Difficult Conversations**

- **Manage yourself**
- **Develop your skills**

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**remember: one minute!**

Deliver an elevator pitch for your unit.
Difficult Conversations

What situations give you heartburn?

Do the people involved have anything in common?

What is it? Can you articulate it?

Scenario 1:
The other person is totally off base, confused, neurotic, stupid and/or just generally wrong.

Scenario 2:
The other person might have a point; you could be mistaken or have misunderstood.

Long-Term Relationships

Whichever it is, you are in an unpleasant situation.
Reality: The only conduct you control is your own.

Tell the person off?

Solve a problem?

Never deal with him or her again?

Layer professional skills over your personality and reactions.

Goal:
**GOAL:** Layer professional skills over your personality and reactions.

1. Know your conflict comfort and style

2. Gain specific skills

3. Practice, so they’re accessible when needed

**Develop your skills**

- Learn a little social psychology
- Listen well, ask good questions
- Align with others
- Develop good personal scripts

**A Little Social Psychology**

- Egocentrism bias
- Reciprocity norms
- Sinister attribution error
Never attribute to malice that which incompetence will explain.

Knoll Corollary

Never attribute to incompetence that which temporary inattention or miscommunication will explain.

Likability Matters

Exercise

“Uh huh” (nodding)

“Tell me more about that.”

“Help me understand more about...”
Influence

Why?

Importance of being heard

Stop
Look
Listen
Negotiators who ask more questions get better results.

Persuasion

How good are your questions?

Emotions

People process information differently in different moods.

Persuasion

How well do you listen?

Emotion is a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Buy time

Influence

Importance of being understood

You might learn something

Influence

Importance of being heard

Stop
Look
Listen
Negotiators who ask more questions get better results.

Persuasion

How good are your questions?

Emotions

People process information differently in different moods.

Persuasion

How well do you listen?

Emotion is a self-fulfilling prophesy.
Go-to Questions

“Can you show me?”  “Can you help me understand?”

“Is this right?”  “Just to be clear, you’re suggesting…?”

1. As a mark of a person who learns and cares about learning
2. To avoid cognitive errors (sinister attribution bias)
3. To prevent problems, defuse aggression spirals

Aligning with Others

Improves audience attention, retention
Changes your alignment
Reduces conflict, aggression spirals
Takes constant practice!
Collect YESes
Agree wherever you can
Agree without conceding
Acknowledge the person
Acknowledge the person's competence and authority
Don't contradict, agree and build

Words you have prepared, in advance, and practiced, for predictable situations.

Personal Scripts

Preemptive
1. Speaking regularly about values & mission
2. Building it into a habit to ask questions about others, their interests
3. For anticipated events: You know it's coming (feedback, evaluation, difficult conversations)

Reactive
4. Buying time to think
5. Calling a pause in a topic or discussion that is getting off the rails, too heated
6. Turning the tables to the other/s: asking for solutions
7. Noting positives
8. Agreeing to disagree

Some Useful Scripts

"I need some time to reflect. Perhaps I could get back to you in about 20 minutes?"
"I recall there is something about that in the policy manual. Let me review that and get back to you."
"I'm so rushed right now. I couldn't do this justice. I'll carve out some dedicated time Wednesday afternoon."
"This will affect others as well as just you. As soon as I have had a chance to speak with each, I will decide."
Constructing Personal Scripts—Difficult Conversations

1. Soft opening: set tone
2. Leave time and conversational opening for response
3. Leave room for a misunderstanding
4. Use low-key language
5. Stay factual
6. Use "I" not "you" messages
7. Ask questions, ask questions, ask questions! (listen to answers)

Tone is Essential

Polite
Quiet
Respectful

Assertion, not aggression.

More Useful Scripts

“I am interested in your success. It is my duty to share a candid evaluation with you so you can assess and adjust going forward.”

“I’m not comfortable discussing that.”

“Let’s agree to disagree for now and both go have a good think about this. Let’s try again tomorrow.”

“I hear what you’re saying and I respect how strongly you feel.”
Scripts for Receiving Complaints

“What actions do you seek from me?”

“I need to find out how others view this matter. I will do that and get back to you.”

“You need to do what you need to do.”

Concepts, Phrases to Excise

“You have to understand…” or “You need to…”

“You’ll just have to trust me on this.”

“I regret that you’re unhappy with my decision.”

“This is as hard for me as it is for you.”

Depersonalize conflict
Two Hard, Leveraging Changes

Spend the first two minutes of every interaction just making sure you have understood the other party’s perspective.

No arguing back!

Replace “but” with “and” in your vocabulary and phrasing.

You can win the battle and still lose the war.

Change the script by changing your lines.

Questions or concerns? Key takeaways?
1. Review the definition of leadership you wrote in the first session, and update it, as appropriate.

2. Read something that matches your interests.

3. Take care of you and yours until we next meet!

4. Practice applying the And Stance in your everyday life. First, try to go one week without using “but” in an email, instead restructuring the statement with “and” in order to align with others. Then, try to go 24 hours without saying “but” at all.