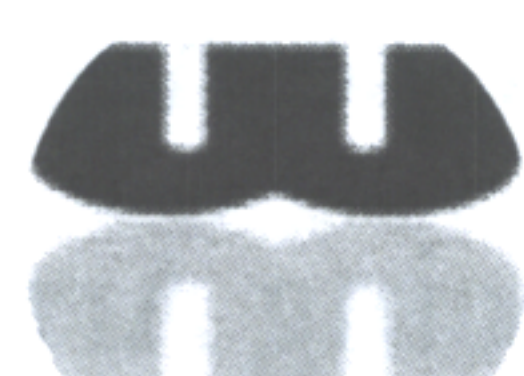


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How To Turn Negative, Depressing Conversations To Positive Communication



WomensMedia Contributor 

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Here are 4 skills to use. ICLIPART

By Dianna Booher

Everywhere you turn these last few weeks, you hear bad news and sad stories about the Coronavirus and the economy. It's understandable that conversations often take on the

To avoid that outcome, challenge yourself to remain positive and to encourage others to do the same. Here are some specific ways to do that.

Separate Fact From Opinion

Almost every social media outlet you access these days gives *different* bad news about the Coronavirus pandemic. Fortunately, much of it is untrue. That is, someone has “predicted,” “estimated,” “projected,” or simply stated that we are facing Armageddon.

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A key question to ponder in the back of your mind—or, on occasion, to ask the speaker or author: “What’s your source for that?” While I do spend some time on social media, don’t trust much posted there as truth or fact.

This is not to allege evil intentions. Instead, it is to say people post or pass on information without sound investigation of what’s fact and what’s rumor.

Keep in mind that a “fact” is a verifiable truth, event, or happening. Additionally, consider how personal communication styles affect your own interpretation of fact or opinion. For example, let’s say Brittney, a reserved, timid person, makes this statement “A lot more people have become ill with the virus than we first expected.”

From the phrasing, this sounds like an opinion because of the vague words and phrases “A lot” and “than we first expected.” To determine if the statement is fact, you’ll need to probe with a question or two: “What do you mean by *a lot*?” Or: “Are you referring to a specific estimate by an official from the CDC?” When Brittney answers, then you can determine for yourself if her original statement was an opinion or a fact. (Does she have the specific statistics? Can she cite an official comment to back up her assertion?)

On the other hand, Manuel may write or speak with confidence: “More than 20 percent of the population has become infected.” But even though he’s stating statistics authoritatively and thinks his information is *right*, he could be completely *wrong*.

So be careful not to succumb to gloom-and-doom before you sort what's real versus what's speculation.

Ask About Their Solution

When a discouraging conversation develops as you wait for your teleconference to start you can change the nature of the call altogether with questions or comments like the following: "I just saw a post about a really clever idea for soliciting donations. The idea came from a 16-year-old who decided to blah, blah, blah." The conversation will likely take a sharp positive turn.

Or you can do the same with a question. If someone begins talking about a problem, probe: "So what are you or some of your friends doing to change that situation—any new solutions from your team that could solve a problem like that?"

Again, the conversation will very likely pivot to the positive.

Praise or Thank Someone

In a somber, serious time like the present, people often feel stalled or stunned—as if going through shell shock. A call, text, or email to give them positive feedback or to thank them for something they're doing can have a huge impact during a period of loss. While encouraging conversations or notes are always welcome, during a "down" time, they are doubly so.

Watch Your Temper and Tone

More than one friend and coworker has recently said within my hearing about either a spouse or coworker: "We seem to be at each other's throats lately! [Carlos or Carrie] is snarky about every little thing that happens."

Keep in mind that stressed people react strangely. Their behavior during a downtime can be quite unusual and disturbing. So keep in mind that "somebody" may be you—not the person on the other end of the conversation or call.

or shoot off a text or email.

Guard against “stress leakage” in the form of irritability. It’s as contagious as the virus.

Bottom-line: Aim to be a bright light shining in a corner of dark communication.

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 48 books, including Communicate Like a Leader. She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at BooherResearch.com and @DiannaBooher.

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