

# CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

## VIRTUAL HANDBOOK



**Virtual Academy**

## Coping Strategies

Think about **when you've** found yourself having a challenging conversation.

Take a look at the statements below and identify your personal strategies for coping with challenging **conversations**. Insert an "X" by clicking the relevant box.

	True	False	Statement
1			At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with <b>people I'm having problems with</b>
2			I have put off returning phone calls or e-mails because I simply <b>didn't want to deal with the person who sent them</b>
3			Sometimes when people bring up a touchy or awkward issue, I try to change the subject
4			When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give my full and candid opinion
5			Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on <b>jokes or sarcastic remarks to let them know I'm frustrated</b>
6			<b>When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer</b> weak or insincere complements to soften the blow
7			In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument
8			If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be
9			When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all
10			<b>When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that</b> others might take as forceful or attacking – comments such as <b>"give me a break" or "that's ridiculous"</b>
11			Sometimes when things get heated, I move from arguing against <b>others' points to saying things that hurt them personally</b>
12			<b>If I get into a heated discussion, I've been known to be tough on</b> the other person. In fact, the person might feel a bit insulted or hurt

## Coping Strategies - Practice

Read the statements below and discuss/decide which coping strategy is being adopted.  
Remember the 6 Coping Strategies are:

Masking    Avoiding    Withdrawing    Controlling    Labelling    Attacking

1	<i>"I think your idea is pure brilliance. Let's invest our entire budget on it, on the slim chance that it will work".</i>	
2	<i>"Somebody has to be honest here and say that this is just another one of your ridiculous ideas".</i>	
3	<i>"We've tried their product and it was a complete disaster. Everyone knows they are incapable of delivering on time, their product range costs more than the space programme and they have the worst customer service on the planet".</i>	
4	<i>"Speaking of cost cutting ideas for our department, did you see the news last night, when it was announced that the Government is cutting funding for developing nations?".</i>	
5	<i>"You're not going to listen to them are you? First of all they are from Head Office and secondly they work in HR and we know what they're like".</i>	
6	<i>"I can't talk right now. I need to take another call".</i>	

Also discuss these two questions:

- Why do we choose to respond in these ways?
- What benefits do these responses bring?

Make a few notes in your "notes" panel.

## Ladder of Inference – The 5Cookies Story

Think of the 5 Cookies story we looked at earlier... unpack the story by working down the ladder until you are left with a 100% pure factual, non-emotive description of what actually happened.

Steps of Ladder		What Happened
5	Take Action based on our new beliefs	
4	Draw Conclusions and forming new beliefs or affirming old ones	
3	Add Assumptions and meanings based on our past experiences	
2	Interpret Data <b>that we've just</b> seen	
1	Select Data to focus on Is it 100% factual?	

When you reach the bottom, write a sentence (based on the directly observable data) that the business lady could have communicated to the man.

Write the sentence in the notes panel.

## Ladder of Inference – Your Own Example

Think of a recent example of a challenging conversation you have had.

Starting at the top, when you realised that you had a problem, work down the ladder until you are left with a 100% pure factual, non-emotive description of what happened.

Steps of Ladder		What Happened
5	Take Action based on our new beliefs	
4	Draw Conclusions and forming new beliefs or affirming old ones	
3	Add Assumptions and meanings based on our past experiences	
2	Interpret Data <b>that we've</b> just seen	
1	Select Data to focus on Is it 100% factual?	

When you reach the bottom, write a sentence below (based on the directly observable data) that you could use in your own situation: