



Guidelines for Peer Coaching

Insightful and supportive peer feedback on discussants' proposed "scripts" and strategies for responding to values conflicts is an essential part of the *Giving Voice to Values* approach. This does not mean that there is no critique. Rather it means that those who share their proposed responses to the values conflict, as well as those who are serving as "peer coaches," all adopt a stance of joint problem-solving. That is, the role of the coaches is not to "grade" their peers' responses, but rather to work as a team to enhance them. This includes noting the strengths of a proposed response (so that they can be retained) as well as identifying the remaining questions (so that the group can collaborate on more effective solutions).¹

What follows is a template for listening to and de-briefing the sharing of proposed "scripts" and strategies for responding to values conflicts.

Preliminary Reflection

- **Directed to Listeners:** After listening to your colleague's response to the values conflict under discussion but before discussing it, take a moment to silently consider your responses to the following questions.
 - What is your immediate response to your colleague's strategy and "script"?
 - What are the STRENGTHS of this response?
 - What questions do you still have for your colleague?
 - If you were the target of this response, how do you think you would react?
 - What might improve this response?
- **Directed to Speakers:** After sharing your response to the values conflict under discussion but before discussing it, take a moment to silently consider your responses to the following questions.
 - What do you see as the STRENGTHS of your response?
 - What still concerns you?

¹ Although role playing can be a useful approach for practicing the delivery of these responses, the coaching approach described differs in some important ways. In role playing, there is often an implicit adversarial relationship between the individuals in each role. That is, the person who plays the role of the listener will tend to see it as his or her job to resist or find flaws in the speaker's presentation. The experience we want to create here is one of a group of talented and intelligent participants working *together* to craft an effective response.

If role playing *is* used, it would be best to postpone the role play until after the responders have had a chance to refine and enhance their response, as a group. Additionally, the group can support the individual playing the role of responder.

- What do you think would be helpful in enabling you to respond more effectively? What would you like to ask for from your peers?

Process Questions

- Invite Speakers to share their answers to the questions above.
- Invite Listeners to share their answers to the questions above.
- Invite Speakers to respond to the following: Is that a helpful response to you?
 - If yes, why?
 - If no, why not? What would be more helpful?
- Discussion

When designing, reflecting upon and discussing responses to values conflicts, the following questions may be useful:

- Who is the critical audience(s)? What is at stake for them?
- What is the optimal timing for your effort? Should it be broken down into stages in some way? Sequenced?
- Will you do this solo? With allies? (If yes, whom?)
- Will you do this off-line or in public? One-on-one or in a group?
- Do you have all the information you need (research, interpersonal insights, examples of past successes or failures, etc.)?
- Do you have adequate sources of support, inside and/or outside the organization? You might brainstorm all the possible sources of support and what you think each of them may be best able to provide. For example:
 - Peers within the organization may have information and be able to confirm or disprove your data.
 - Family members may be able to place the choice into a larger perspective, with regard to your deepest values and your personal identity. It may also be helpful to discuss your situation with close family, as a way of engaging them in the process *with* you so that you are not on this journey alone, particularly when the risks may affect them as well. Otherwise, fear of admitting the risks to those close to us can hinder our sense of free decision making.
 - Given your own self-assessment of your typical reactions and/or blind spots, have you insured that you have consulted advisors who are best suited to raise what you are likely to miss?
- How would you describe the approach you take in your proposed response:
 - A Learning Stance: open-minded (e.g., “Help me to understand how you thinking about this...”)
 - Dialogue (e.g., “Can we keep this decision open for a while longer, so that we can consider other perspectives?”)
 - Persuasion: You are convinced of your position but want to persuade the other (e.g., “I have done a lot of thinking about this situation and I have concluded... I would really appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with you”).
 - Adversarial: You are convinced of your position and your goal is to simply state your position and let the chips fall where they may (e.g., “I have done a lot of thinking about this situation and I have concluded...I am sorry if you disagree but I cannot pursue this course of action”).
 - One-size-fits-all arguments, or somehow tailored for audience(s): (e.g., “It’s not honest” is a one size fits all argument whereas “Our firm’s reputation for honesty is its greatest asset. Remember how our customers stood by us when we discovered that data-theft last year? That

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was because they believed we would never deceive them about their risks” is an example of a more tailored argument. Both can be effective in different situations, but it is best to be aware of our choices).

- Problem-solving: (e.g., “I see what’s at stake here and why you are suggesting this course of action, but I am confident we can find another solution if we bring all our talents to bear here.”)
- Other approaches?
- What is the biggest Challenge/Thorniest Arguments you face?
- What are your Strongest Argument(s)?
- What will it take to *do* this?
 - For your target listener: How will you need to frame this choice to tap into his/her commitment?
 - For yourself: How will you need to frame this choice to tap into your own commitment and courage?

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