



## STEP 6: PAIRS ~ ADDITIONAL TOOLS TO RESPOND IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

### A: ASK

#### **If someone is strongly disagreeing with you, you could ask:**

- Could you say more about that?
- Can you give an example?
- Can you give me some background on this situation?
- Help me understand how you came to that conclusion?
- Can you help me understand what you disagree with or find frustrating?
- Can you talk about the reasons you feel so strongly?

#### **If you do not agree with someone's idea or opinion, you could ask:**

- What are your intended outcomes for that idea?
- How does that idea advance our strategic goals?
- How does your approach connect with what I was suggesting?
- How might that play out if we go in this direction?

#### **If you want to state your perspective after someone has disagreed with you, you can start with:**

- I want to make sure I understand your point. You are saying that... How close am I in describing what you are concerned about?
- I can understand your perspective. And I'd like to share a few more thoughts....
- As I listen to you, a dilemma for me is....
- My experience has been somewhat different....
- Another way I might approach this is....
- I believe/think \_\_\_\_\_. How is this similar or different for you?

#### **If you believe someone said something inappropriate or offensive:**

- Here is what I heard you say. How well did I understand you?
- Come again? or Can you repeat that?
- What do you mean when you say...?
- Can you help me understand what you meant by that?
- What did you want to communicate with your comment?
- What message do you think that comment could send?
- Can you help me understand your intent when you said...?
- I trust you didn't intend to \_\_\_\_\_.
- You probably didn't notice what the impact of that comment was when you said...

**If two or more people are in conflict and don't appear to be understanding each other's points, you could enter with:**

- So, you're saying that...
- So, from your perspective...
- I want to make sure I understand your point. Are you saying that...?
- I thought I heard you say... Is that accurate?
- I may have missed some of what led up to what was said just now. Can someone help me understand the context of what is occurring?

**If you sense someone hasn't fully expressed their point, you could start with:**

- I'm not fully understanding your point. Can you say more?
- I'm on a learning edge here... What I'm curious about is...
- What is underneath your comment/question?
- Is there a question or a concern behind your statement?

**If you sense that someone may have felt triggered by something you said, you could say:**

- I'm wondering if what I said had an impact on you...
- My sense is some folks may have been impacted by what I just said...

**If a colleague is upset about something but not fully discussing it, you could ask:**

- Can you say more about what happened and what the impact was?
- What's the most \_\_\_\_ (frustrating, embarrassing, anxiety producing, etc.) part about that situation?
- What are your key concerns about this?

**If you want to expand the discussion to see if others will engage the difficult dynamics, you could say:**

- I am curious what others are thinking....
- What are some perspectives or reactions of others?
- How do others relate to what's been said?
- I appreciate what you're saying. Anyone have a different perspective or something else to add?

**If you are concerned that you have been misunderstood, you could say:**

- I want to make sure I am understood. Can you tell me what you're hearing me say?
- I'm not sure I was able to get my point across. Would you share the essence of what you heard me say?
- I believe I said something different than you heard... What I said was... Is that what you had thought?
- I'd like to clarify what I said before because it is different than what you are referencing...

**If the group is struggling to move forward, you could ask:**

- What do you see as the next steps?
- Are there any actions we want to avoid as we move forward?
- What would you suggest?
- One thought could be to \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think?
- Might it be possible to \_\_\_\_\_?
- I'd like us to seriously consider...

**When you want a group to reflect on its processes and improve team dynamics, you could ask:**

- In what ways are we working together that help us be productive?
- Are there any group dynamics that could be getting in our way?
- What might you suggest we do differently in the future?

**If you want to debrief the impact of a difficult conversation with a colleague, you could ask:**

- I appreciate your discussing this with me, and I'm curious how that conversation was for you?
- Is there anything you would want me to do differently in the future?
- How would you like us to discuss issues in the future?

**S: SHARE**

**If you want to connect by sharing a story or example from your own experience, you can say:**

- I can relate. Just last week, I...
- I remember when I...
- I relate. I used to...
- This reminds me of when....

**If you want to share the impact of someone's comments or behavior, you can say:**

- When I hear you say that, I think/feel....
- I'd like to share the impact of your comment...
- I'm feeling uncomfortable with what you're saying...
- Here's what's going on for me as I hear you....
- My concern, if we move in this direction, is...

**To invite others to share their feelings or the impact they are experiencing, you can say:**

- How are others reacting or impacted by this?
- I'm noticing I'm feeling\_\_\_\_, anyone else?
- I'm noticing I have some concerns. Anyone else?
- I am deeply moved by your example. How are others impacted?
- When \_\_\_\_\_ just happened, I felt \_\_\_\_\_. Does anyone else relate to me? Or did anyone else feel triggered just now?