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?