

3CHAIRS PROCESS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Bringing Self-Connection, Intensity Practice, and Elements of Empathy into Difficult Conversations

Foundation Setting

- How are you doing today, separate from the conversation? How's your mood?
- How are you feeling about the conversation? What are your hopes & intentions?
- Do you agree to the process? Any other requests for safety, confidentiality, etc.?

Phase I — Understanding Without Agreement — *What is important to each of us*

- Person A and Person B take turns speaking and listening, with the intention to understand even if there isn't agreement. Listener waits without interrupting until speaker is finished. Then, if willing, listener reflects back understanding (*without agreeing or disagreeing*). Speaker clarifies the accuracy of the reflection if needed. Then switch who is speaker and listener. [*Can be helpful to use Feelings and Needs sheets or cards*]
- If a 3rd person is present, who can sit in the "3rd chair" role of providing a listening empathic presence to both person A and B, that 3rd person can also support as needed to hold and track the 3 phases of the process.

Phase II — Clarifying Needs — *What we all want as human beings*

- Person A and B take turns saying back to each other what they heard or guess are the most important needs *of the other person* from Phase I. The other person clarifies their most important needs, if needed.
- If there is a 3rd person, they can help A and B as needed to clarify the needs.

Phase III — Requests & Agreements — *Working together to meet our needs*

- Person A and B take turns brainstorming and generating ideas/requests for specific actions to contribute to what would meet the needs of both.
- Then make and confirm agreements:
 - Main agreement(s) — action steps, experimental, maybe small
 - Supporting agreements — ways to help keep main agreement(s)
 - Restoring agreement — what to do if main agreement(s) not kept?
- If there is a 3rd person, they can help as needed A and B make and clarify requests and agreements.

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