

## 3CHAIRS PROCESS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

*3-Part Conversation Structure for When There is Conflict of Beliefs and/or Strategies*

### 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 *rather than to agree or disagree*. Listener listens without interrupting until speaker is finished. Then, if willing, listener reflects back understanding (without responding to what was said). Speaker clarifies the accuracy of the reflection if needed. Then switch who is speaker and listener.
- If a 3rd person is present to be in the “3<sup>rd</sup> chair” role of providing an empathic listening presence to both person A and B, that 3rd person can also support as needed holding and tracking the 3 phases of the process.

### **Phase II — Clarifying What's Most Important — *What we all want as human beings***

- Person A and B take turns saying what's most important personally and universally (i.e. most important needs) from what was said in Phase I. One option is to say back to each other what you heard or guess is most important *for the other person*. The other person clarifies if needed what is accurate for them.
- 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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