

The Discomfort Zone: Turn Difficult Conversations into Positive Results



with Dr. Marcia Reynolds

The slide features the "WIN Women in NECA" logo in the top left corner. The main title is centered in a bold, dark green font. Below the title, the speaker's name "with Dr. Marcia Reynolds" is written in a smaller, black font. The background is white with a decorative border of semi-circles in green, yellow, and dark green at the bottom.

My 5-Year Itch

A photograph of a hiker in a red jacket and black pants, standing on a rocky mountain peak with arms raised in triumph. The background shows a vast, snow-capped mountain range under a cloudy sky.The "WIN" logo is positioned in the bottom left corner of the slide.

Something Missing

An illustration featuring three elements: a hiker with a backpack, a house with a red roof and a red ribbon, and a trophy with a purple and blue base. The hiker is in the foreground, looking towards the house and trophy.The "WIN" logo is positioned in the bottom left corner of the slide.

I Went for One More Degree...



...one more certification, one more accomplishment, one more mountain to climb.



What are the Challenges for Smart, Goal-Focused Women in the Workplace?



The bright and dark sides of our motivators...

5 Common Challenges

1. Confidence (in skills, but not self)
2. Desire for Contributions and Ability to Be Recognized (can lead to communication breakdowns, emotional reactivity)
3. Need for New Challenges (overcommitting = overwhelm)
4. Work Defines Their Identity (often out of balance)
5. Self-Sufficiency (avoid asking for help)



Agenda – Turning Difficult Conversations into Positive Results

1. Strategic communications
2. Claim your personal powers
3. Set boundaries and communicate requests
4. Self-Care



1. Strategic Communications

Intention

Emotions

Connection

Intention Reflection

Recall a group or one-on-one interaction you led where the outcome was not ideal.

What was your real intent for the conversation (what change did you want to happen as a result)? *Write this on your handout.*

Did you know what goal or outcome was important to them and would inspire a change in behavior? (**what do they most want that you can align with what you want?**)

Intention in Conversations

1. When you want someone to change their mind or behavior, but your goal isn't to set a boundary – How do you align your intention with something important to them?
2. When you want your position or perspective to be considered before a decision is made or the next action is taken – Are you willing to hear their perspective first?

Intention in Conversations

Genuine Intention

When you want someone or a group to change their mind or behavior —
Do you know what is important to them?
Is there a way to align your desires so you both can get your needs met?

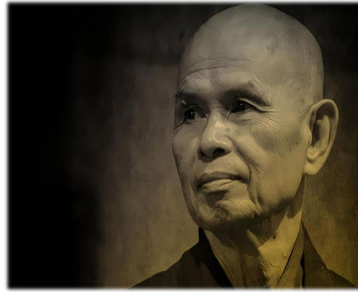
Intention must include their desires, not just your goals.

Intention

When you feel you need to make them think or act differently...

"...return to a state of presence that says, I am here for you."

Let them know you recognize what is important to them. You aren't there to make them wrong; you are there to find the best way forward.



- Thich Nhat Hanh,
Buddhist teacher

Intention in Conversations

Genuine
Intention

When you want your ideas considered—
How can you let them know you understand their
ideas and perspective first?
Seek to summarize and understand, then ask if
they are open to your ideas.

People need to be heard before they will fully hear you.

Genuine Intentions

If you had a chance to repeat the experience that didn't turn out well, what intention and actions would you focus on? *Write this on your handout.*

Can you feel sincere about your intention?

Relational Resonance – when they feel seen, heard, and you genuinely care about their goals, perspective, and desires, your energies can align. This state is essential for your words to have the impact you want.

1. Strategic Communications

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Choosing Your Emotions

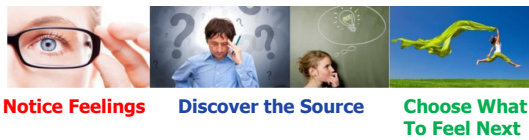
What happens when you enter a room?
What happens when you leave the room?



Emotional Awareness and Choice

Set the tone by
choosing your emotions.

Emotional Intelligence is Your Ability to...



Notice Feelings

Discover the Source

Choose What
To Feel Next

To better connect
and create with others.

Emotional Self-Awareness

Difficult emotions
first show up as a
point of tightness
in your body.

Then your brain
interprets the
threat.

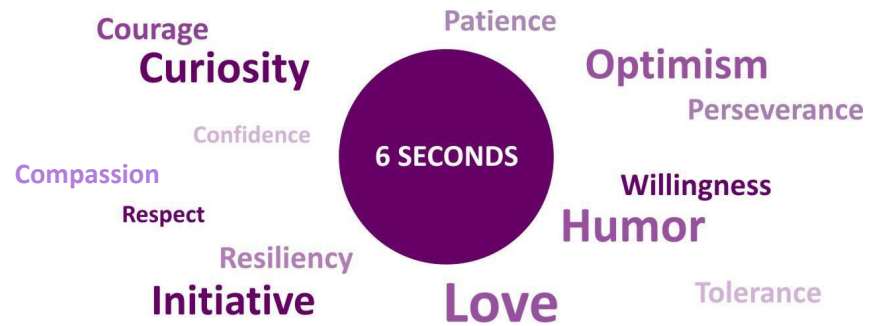


Emotional Self-Awareness



Can you notice when a spot in your body tightens up so you can quickly release it and return to your chosen emotional state?

Emotional Intelligence: How Quickly Can You Choose?



Emotional Intelligence: How Quickly Can You Choose?



- Recognize Points of Tightness
- Breathe and Release the Tension
- Ground Yourself in the Present
- Focus on Your Intention and How You Want to Feel

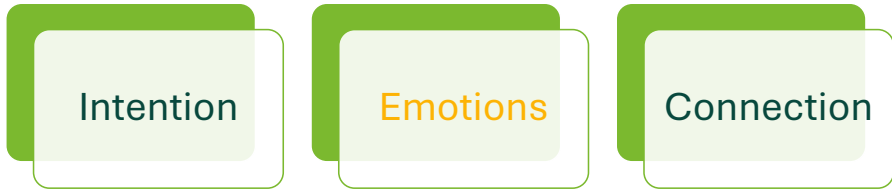
YOU SET THE EMOTIONAL TONE!

Assignment

3 Times a Day – Notice what you are feeling and why.

Do this for 2-3 weeks to wire your brain for self-awareness.

1. Strategic Communications



There will be times...

Your impatience will grow.

You will judge the person as incompetent, that they don't care, or they will never change.

Can you notice your body tightening up with your judgment? What can you do to embody the feelings of patience, respect and curiosity?



Your Superpower - Help Them See Their Thinking

Concisely summarize what you hear. With genuine curiosity, ask what they mean by the key words they share. Notice what seems most important to them.

Start with "So you are saying..." or "What do you mean when you said..." or "You seem very excited and certain about what you think we should focus on."



Use their words when you summarize what they say and express, and then let them confirm, explain, or edit what you offer.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE WRONG

— Receiving vs Listening

Don't listen for how to respond; take in what they share and offer key points back to consider.

- A** Accept with no judgment
- S** Summarize what you hear
- E** Explore their thoughts and perspective with curious questions, so you both come to understand what they mean and want.



1. Strategic Communications

Intention

Emotions

Connection

Consider a conversation you need to have that could be difficult. How will you will approach your conversation now?

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2. Claiming Your Power



True power is not your ability to make others do things; it's your ability to create the circumstances where others can do great things.

Knowing where you draw your power from will maintain your focus, motivation, and confidence.

Let's look at your sources of power beyond your experience, skills, and knowledge.

Your Power Beyond Your Skills and Knowledge

1. Recall a peak experience where you felt fully alive, fulfilled, and proud.
2. What internal strengths did you draw on that helped to create this peak experience?



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Your Power Beyond Your Skills and Knowledge

What

- Strengths, Talents, Gifts
- Emotions/Attitude
- Values
- Unique Sense/Perspective

Declare at least 5 of your personal powers.

Played into your peak experience?

Claiming Your Personal Power and Purpose



Knowing your internal powers gives you more strength than the results of your accomplishments, and no one can take these away from you.

You can also discover your purpose – what most fulfills you about your work – when you recognize your peak moments.

What have you learned about yourself that you can carry forward to a challenge you are now facing?

3. Set Boundaries And Communicate Requests



Even when it feels uncomfortable, you will feel better about yourself when you don't let others talk over you, or you ask for your contribution to be recognized when it is not included.

You may be judged when you stand up for yourself. What is the worst that can happen? What is the gain for you?

Courage is acting in the face of fear. Being calmly direct with requests will get easier with time.

Setting Boundaries



- Describe the behavior that was offensive.
- Clearly and briefly state the impact the behavior or words had on you. "As a result, I feel you don't (respect, accept, believe in me or what I can do).
- Declare what you would like them to do now or in the future.



Before your next potentially frustrating conversation, reach out to a friend, mentor, or someone you connected with at this conference to practice what you might say to set a boundary and make a request.

4. Self-Care

You Can't Separate Life and Work

- Take care of yourself – nourish your body with healthy food, enjoyable exercise, and good sleep; decrease worries around money; nurture positive friendships; and maintain well-being with a practice that connects you with universal energy.
- Make sure your environment supports your inner sense of stability.
- Set healthy boundaries when expectations override your self-care. Learn to say "no" when your plate is full even though you know you can do the job well.

Balancing your energies is critical to your success!

What are your next steps for handling difficult conversations with ease and grace?

Write one or two goals as first steps that you are willing to commit to as soon as possible to ensure your growth.

Acknowledge Daily Effort

Train Your Brain to See Success

Start your day with a 5-minute vision
Who > What > How > Emotional State

End your day celebrating what you tried.
Acknowledge successes and lessons learned. Your brain will support your growth as you confirm the probability and safety of your goals.





**Set your goals.
Stick with them when it feels awkward.
Acknowledge your growth, little by little.
Gather a community of support to be there
for each other on this journey.**

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