

TURNING
DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS
INTO
OPPORTUNITIES



David Buirs



David Buirs

1.

Effective communication depends on the *free flow of information*.

The barrier? **Fear.**



David Buirs

2.

What causes fear? Not the message itself, but the **context -**

it happens when we imagine **negative intentions or **incompetence** with the other.**



David Buirs

3.

This fear triggers either **silence or **aggression**.**



David Buirs

4.

Silence:

Holding back true thoughts
(sugar-coating, sarcasm, pleasing)

Thinks: *“this plan is doomed to fail”*
Says: “it could work”

Avoiding the topic

Withdrawing



David Buirs

5.

Agression:

Imposing your views

Dominating the conversation

Stereotyping/labeling

Insulting/belittling

Threats



David Buirs

6.

Conclusion: passive and aggressive behavior comes from fear.

To allow information to freely move, **create safety.**



David Buirs

7.

How to create safety?

Find and emphasize a **shared purpose,**

and ensure **mutual respect.**



David Buirs

8.

Shared purpose:

Align on a common goal:

“We both want to collaborate and make this project work / see you grow / solve this challenge.”



David Buirs

9.

Mutual respect:

Even if you dislike someone, see them as a **human being**, with dreams, fears, insecurities, just like yourself.

People pick up on **judgements** – try limit them and practice empathy to foster mutual respect.



David Buirs

10.

Is the shared purpose or mutual respect at risk?

Either:

Genuinely apologize - when you made a mistake

Redefine shared goals

Use contrasting



David Buirs

11.

Contrasting:

“What I **don’t want is... *to offend you.*”**

[address fear you don’t respect them or have bad intentions]

“What I **do want is... *to help you grow and be successful in your role.*”**



David Buirs

12.

Recap:

Silence or aggression signal **fear**.

Cultivate a **shared purpose** and **respect** to dismantle fear, paving the way for smoother, more effective conversations.



David Buirs

And remember:

Feeling anxious about certain conversations is completely **normal**.

With each conversation, you'll gain more **confidence**.

You don't have to be perfect.

Good luck!