

# CONFLICT & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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## Beginning the Conversation with Purpose

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

### Reading

- Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). What's Your Purpose? In *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 131–146). New York: Viking Penguin.
- Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). Getting Started. In *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 147–162). New York: Viking Penguin.
- *Optional*: Manzoni, J.-F. (2002, September). A Better Way to Deliver Bad News. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(9), 114–9, 126.
- *Optional*: Fisher, R., & Shapiro, D. (2005). Choose a Fulfilling Role. In *Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate* (pp. 115–140). New York: Viking Penguin.

### Questions

1. Why is it so important to have a purpose in deciding whether or not to engage in a difficult conversation?
2. In coming up with your purpose, Stone *et al* provide three questions to ask yourself. What are these questions, and how does each help you identify a purpose for deciding whether or not to engage in a difficult conversation?
3. Stone *et al* do suggest that there are three purposes that do make sense for a difficult conversation. What are these?
4. Why do Stone *et al* believe we tend to start out a difficult conversation in the wrong way? What two steps do they give for starting off in the right direction?

One specific kind of conversation Stone *et al* talk about is delivering bad news. Such conversations are especially difficult because they may trigger an identity quake within you—after all, we often do not feel like a good person when firing someone or giving them negative feedback. Similarly, bad news is likely to trigger a quake within the recipient as well. The optional reading by Manzoni provides concrete advice for such situations (and it should seem pretty similar to the material we have already covered in this course).

In their discussion of how to start the conversation, Stone *et al* also suggest that you should offer the other party an appealing role in managing the problem. Indeed, role is a core emotional concern, and so the optional reading from Fisher and Shapiro goes into greater detail about this idea.