
Clean Talk 101

How to master the art of difficult conversations
without busting the relationship

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What is Clean Talk?

Clean Talk is a very easy to use model of communication that can help you make any conversation more productive.

With some practice, it will allow you to know how to take responsibility for your part of whatever needs to be addressed rather than solely blaming the other person for a challenge or difficulty in communicating, and therefore be more likely to get what you want from/with them.

You can use the Clean Talk framework in several ways:

- to simply get clear for yourself on what has happened, what assumptions you are making about what has happened, how you are feeling as a result and what you would like to see happen to resolve things.
- to prepare and to guide what you actually say in a challenging conversation with another person.
- to guide or coach a friend, colleague or mentee who needs to get 'unstuck' before having a challenging or important conversation with another person

Clean Talk does not guarantee that you will 'win' in the conversation or get what you want/need in every single interaction, but it is designed to ensure that you speak your truth without breaking the relationship.

It will guarantee that you will have prepared and spoken so as to show up as the best you possible: clear headed; aware of your thoughts, feelings and assumptions; genuine; clear about your own boundaries and yet also coming from a place of generosity of spirit. It will ensure that you have spoken your truth without 'attacking' the other person.

The model was created by Cliff Barry of Shadowwork

Clean Talk

Core Intention: Win/Win – You are taking the time to invite yourself and the other person into a Clean Talk conversation.

Step 5. (essential inquiry!) What does the other person see/feel/think/want?

3b. Your part in this situation



**3. Your perceptions,
Judgments**

I think.....

I interpret this as...

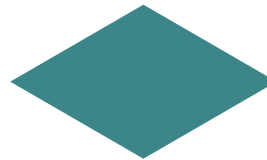
To me, this means

**4. Your Wants/Needs,
Desired Outcome**

What I would like is.....

It is important to me that...

I need to be.....



1. Data

I see.....

I notice...

I observe.....

**2. Your feelings,
Emotions**

I feel.....

I am ...

I get very....

NOTE; NEVER "You made me feel.."

@Cliff Barry

STEP 0. Win/Win Intention (see Step 5!)

Find the right time and space to hold the conversation. Invite the other person into a dialogue. Your intention is to be clean about your own position/views and curious/open about theirs.

Clean Talk Steps

0. Core Intention entering into the conversation: Win/Win

1. What I observe

Describe what you notice - Avoid assumptions – Just the data

When I see... or When I observe... or When I notice....

2. What I feel about it

State your real personal feelings - Share the impact - Not 'you make me feel'

I feel ...(mad, sad, fear,etc) or I am [emotion you are feeling here] or I experience some...

3. What I assume

Share what assumptions you make about what you observed - Share how you evaluate or assess the situation

Because I interpret this as... or To me, this seems... or Based on my experiences this means

3b. My part in this

(optional whether to state but good to be clear about this going into any conversation)

Admittedly my part in this is.... Or Perhaps my part in this is....

4. The change I would like to see

Request clear actions that are objectively measurable (Be aware that you are making a request, not demanding)

I would like for us.... Or I do not want.... Or I cannot,,,, or It is important to me that...

5. Ask: What do you see? (and be sincere about listening to the other side of the picture)

What do you see? Or What am I missing? Or Help me understand...

Be prepared to let the other person share their side of the situation. I.E. Truly LISTEN for understanding

Note: this is a framework for the elements of Clean Talk, not the outline of a monologue. i.e. in real life, you will not get through with all the steps without 'air time' for the other person!

A Basic Example for illustration

0 . Win – Win Intention and Logistics thereof

Invite the person into having a conversation that is a bit challenging for you to initiate, but is important enough for you not to want to avoid. Invite them to have it in the right time and place so that the conditions are private and respectful for both of you.

1. What I observe

Describe what you notice - Avoid negative assumptions *(Note: what a video would capture...no judgment, just what happened)*

Ex. In today's meeting I noticed that you were reading something on your iphone while I was presenting. Not: In all the meetings I notice you don't pay attention to my presentation.

2. What I feel about it

State your personal feelings - Share the impact *(Note: human feelings are: mad, sad, scared, happy, ashamed)*

Ex. I felt some anger (or frustration) when I noticed that. Not You make me angry when I notice that.

3. What I assume

Share what assumptions you make about what you observed. Share how you evaluate or assess the situation *(Note: check on your "ladder of inference" – what beliefs/assumptions/opinions **have you quickly formed**)?*

Ex. Because I assumed that you don't care about the importance of the presentation. Not A laundry list of assumptions. Just 1 key assumption or at most 2.

4. The change I would like to see (the What and the Why)

Request clear actions that are objectively measurable (Be aware that you are making a request, not demanding)

Ex. I would like you to not have your iphone out when we have our team meetings because I need everyone to really know what our plan is, and I believe that it is impossible to pay attention to two things well at once.

5. PAUSE to ask the other person what you may be missing in your own experience and assessment of things

Ex. This is my experience/perception of things, BUT I am truly curious. What do you see happening? What might I be missing? Help me understand your viewpoint or what was going on.

Clean Talk Practice Sheet

Use each of the steps of the Clean Talk framework to prepare for your practice conversation. Remember that these are the elements of the start of a difficult conversation. In real life, you will not most likely be able to speak all 4 elements as a monologue. But staying on course (staying centered) does require preparation.

What is the data?

What I notice is....

What is your dominant emotion?

I feel.....

What is your core assumption or judgment?

To me, it seems that....

What do you want to see happen?

I would like.....

thank you

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