

“Many times when we walk away from a conversation that did not go well—we don’t even understand why. Shawn dissects the components of conversation so that we are able to self-correct and shift course for the next time.”

—Anna Maria DiDio, Senior Director Employee Relations, Pfizer Inc.

# Conversations for Change

*12 Ways to  
Say It Right  
When It Matters  
Most*

**PHRASES  
FOR GETTING  
STARTED**

**TIPS FOR BEING  
A GREAT  
COMMUNICATOR**

**SAMPLE  
SCRIPTS AND  
SCENARIOS**

**SHAWN KENT HAYASHI**

# Emotional Intelligence

The first time I heard the term *emotionally illiterate*, I stopped what I was doing. I knew immediately that *I* was emotionally illiterate. Not only did I not have enough awareness of other people's emotions, but I also did not make distinctions around my own. This impacted my ability to build rapport with others in ways I could not understand at the time. I thought about what the word *literate* meant: recognizing words and knowing what they mean, then being able to read words strung together in phrases and sentences. It takes people years to learn how to read words well enough to enjoy reading. Similar to the process of learning to read, learning to be emotionally literate takes practice too. I was motivated to practice because I wanted to be a good communicator.

Having the emotional intelligence to deal with our own emotions first gives us the confidence and ability to navigate through the changes that are inevitable in our careers. We can experience an emotional hijack as a result of a change, or we can self-regulate and catch ourselves before we head into an emotional uproar. We can be aware of how other people's emotions are impacting their ability to have a meaningful conversation. When we know how to process ourselves and others through our emotions, we will be able to create more meaningful conversations. We will be able to create conversations for change.

Once I understood the power of emotional intelligence, it became clear to me that people who are really great communicators are emotionally literate. The difference between star performers and average performers is emotional intelligence. Great communicators connect on every level with their audience in ways that inspire, motivate, and engage others.

## The Seven Core Emotions

According to Mike Bradshaw in *Using Emotional Intelligence at Work*, people who are emotionally literate earn more money, adapt better, complete tasks faster, and have fewer career derailments. It became powerfully clear to me that emotional intelligence is foundational to good communication and management. Dr. Izzy Justice, one of my mentors and a highly acclaimed expert in global management, shared with me that seven core emotions show up chemically in the body:

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Hope
4. Sadness
5. Envy
6. Anger
7. Fear

This understanding changed my emotional awareness. To be emotionally intelligent you need to know which of the seven emotions is currently operating in you at any given moment, and then you need to know how to intentionally use that to inform your actions. It's helpful to have a map to guide your direction. Some cars have a Global Positioning System (GPS) that enables you to know where you are at any time. Think about these seven emotions as an interactive "emotional guidance system" that shows you the map of emotions

so you can identify where you are now and where you would like to be. You can employ the seven basic emotions as an Emotional GPS.

Each emotion has triggers. For instance, I often feel hope when I begin working with a new coaching client. What triggers you to feel each of the seven core emotions?

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Hope
4. Sadness
5. Envy
6. Anger
7. Fear

Each emotion also has symptoms that show up in our thinking and our bodies. When some people have to give a presentation to a large group, it's often a trigger to feel fear. The symptoms of fear may be foggy thinking, sweaty palms, a shaky voice, or red blotches all over one's face and chest. Each person's emotional triggers and symptoms are unique. In other words, we each have our own customized emotional map.

### **Emotional Symptoms**

Your emotions map is unique to you. Can you map each of these to one of the seven core emotions? Each of these physical symptoms links to an emotion or several emotions:

1. Tapping fingers on the desk as someone speaks
2. Speaking quickly
3. Heart beating faster
4. Giggling
5. Giggling uncontrollably at an inappropriate time
6. Voice becoming loud or high pitched
7. Crying

8. Laughing
9. Sweaty palms
10. Trembling
11. Stomachache
12. Headache
13. Rolling eyes
14. Smiling and singing a playful song
15. Walking with a skip in your step—a little lighter than normal

You will be more emotionally aware when you are able to see the connection between the symptoms and what you are doing now. Ask yourself, “What feeling is underlying my current actions?” This is a way to become aware. Self-awareness is the first step in emotional intelligence. We cannot self-regulate if we are not aware of what we are feeling. When we are aware of what we are feeling, we can also begin to speak about it in a way that builds rapport and empathy in conversations with others.

### **Emotional States of Being**

We are always feeling something. Our emotions are always on whether we are aware of them or not. Ask yourself, “What am I feeling now?” and then pay attention to what is going on in your body, thoughts, and senses. Doing so will help raise your awareness. Each of the following states of being is distinctly tied to one of the seven core emotions. See if you can figure out which ones go together for you:

1. Freedom
2. Passion
3. Enthusiasm
4. Positive expectations
5. Optimism
6. Contentment
7. Boredom
8. Pessimism

9. Frustration
10. A sense of being overwhelmed
11. Disappointment
12. Doubt
13. Worry
14. Blame
15. Discouragement
16. Bitterness
17. Vengefulness
18. Hatred
19. Jealousy
20. Insecurity
21. Guilt
22. Unworthiness
23. Grief
24. Depression
25. Powerlessness
26. Inability to concentrate

Each of us has our own unique emotions map. You are beginning to understand your own emotions map by making these connections. The more you understand what triggers an emotion and how it is expressed in your behavior, the higher your awareness will be, and the result will be that you are able to develop more meaningful communication and connections with others.

## Emotional Intelligence Competencies

Being emotionally intelligent involves being self-aware and able to regulate your thoughts and actions so that you deliberately move toward the feelings that you want to experience. Your mission is to consciously conjure the thoughts and take actions that trigger a positive feeling, so you'll be better equipped for communicating with others. By developing these five emotional intelligence competencies you will do just that:

1. *Self-awareness*. Knowing what you are feeling in the moment
2. *Self-regulation*. Deciding what you want to do with an emotion—in other words, being proactive rather than reactive to an emotion—and intentionally shifting your emotional state so that you are not hijacked into behaving in a way you will regret later
3. *Motivation*. Knowing what excites you and playing to your own passions as you make decisions; using your favorite skills and abilities so you enjoy your work
4. *Empathy*. Being able to identify what someone else is feeling in the moment and work that into the conversation to create rapport
5. *Social skills*. Being able to work with a group, to align the group members around common goals to create forward progress

It is important to start with a focus on the first competency—developing self-awareness—because if we are not aware of what we are feeling in the moment, then we are not able to do the other four. If we experience an emotional hijack, it can be devastating to a conversation. With self-awareness we can change our inner conversation about what we are feeling and create different outcomes in conversations with others. To create conversations for change we must be able to process ourselves and others through emotions.

### The Emotional Ladder

According to Izzy Justice, “In the sequence of an experience emotions come first. Emotions are faster than thoughts. That means emotion trumps competencies, behavior, and character unless we learn to be self-aware and channel our emotions consciously.” Next time you are in a public place where you can observe people, perhaps on a subway or at a conference, see if you are able to identify what emotion another person is experi-

encing just by looking at that person. When you have practiced this, you will be able to look at people and get a sense of which emotion they are currently marinating in.

Many people are stuck emotionally and do not even realize it. I know professionals who are stuck in sadness, anger, or fear and dread going into their offices. One of my clients describes her high-rise office building as the “tower of doom.” She describes the people who work on the floor she does as “sad worker bees.” Although she was very optimistic when she started her new job six months ago, as she has gotten to know her peers and management, she realizes most of them are emotionally stuck and do not know how to process themselves through their emotions. Change is unlikely when we are stuck.

If we want to create strong professional connections with others, we need to create an emotional connection with ourselves first. Once you are aware of your own emotional triggers and symptoms, you can move up the emotion ladder. Think of the seven core emotions, repeated here from above, as an emotional ladder:

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Hope
4. Envy
5. Sadness
6. Anger
7. Fear

When we are stuck emotionally, we stay in one emotion for a long period of time. We carry that emotion with us into the next thing we do. It is as if we have an emotional set point, and the emotional thermostat keeps us in the same emotional temperature. A conversation can change this. I refer to this as processing ourselves through an emotion.



Have you noticed when a conversation changed your emotional state? Perhaps during a job interview in which you discovered that the position was a wonderful fit for your abilities, you noticed yourself shifting to excitement (joy); or alternatively if you realized the position was not a good fit, you may have experienced sadness. You could be carried by that emotion for a long while, taking that emotion into everything you do the rest of the day. Or you could intentionally choose another feeling if you are aware and able to self-regulate.

To move up the emotional ladder, you have to stop judging your own emotions. This is a key to getting unstuck emotionally, too. You can stop oscillating in a stuck emotion by being aware. Ask yourself, “What am I feeling this moment?” Acknowledge the feeling, breathe into it, and notice what arises.

When we feel anger, we need to acknowledge that feeling. Anger is a signal that something has crossed our boundaries. The emotion is begging for a conversation to deal with whatever or whoever crossed our boundaries. Whenever you feel stuck in anger, ask yourself, “What’s going on that I need to have a conversation to clean up?” Create that conversation. Are you self-aware enough so that the next time you notice anger, you will ask yourself, “What crossed my boundaries, and whom do I need to talk to in order to clean it up?”

Then, focus on the next highest feeling, and proceed up the ladder of emotions. Think the thoughts and take the actions that you would if you were feeling joyful, and soon you will be. Try this without judging yourself, and you will experience amazing results.

Intentionally think thoughts and take actions that enable you to choose the next highest feeling on the scale and make decisions from higher emotional states. The conversations outlined in this book help a great deal in cleaning up issues, problems, and conflicts so that you can continue to move up the emotional ladder.

## Shifting from a Problem Focus to a Solution Focus

Emotional intelligence is not hardwired. It can be developed at any age. It takes consistent and focused practice to become emotionally intelligent. People who learn from their experiences have significantly higher emotional intelligence than those who do not recover. When we do not recover, we get stuck in that emotional pattern and re-create it again and again. We talk about it too much and do not move on.

In looking at a solution, you are engaging with positive emotions and are more likely to have (and trigger) positive emotions. You are asking for the results and outcomes you want to experience. If you waved a magic wand and the problems were resolved, what would it look like? That is what we would call being solution focused. In focusing on a problem, you are looking at negativity and are more likely to feel (and trigger) fear, anger, or defensiveness. This becomes a self-defeating spiral, because when we are talking about the problem, we are perceived as snipping, criticizing, being negative. Eventually other people tune us out. This is what we would call being problem focused.

For example, Joan, a coaching client of mine, made this shift in her focus during our work together. I watched Joan go from being someone who complained bitterly about her boss's behavior (always criticizing him and his decision making) to instead asking for what she wanted from him. Joan stopped focusing on his blind spots and began to see his strengths. Instead of complaining, she started describing solutions and what the situation would look like if things were going well. She involved him where his strengths would play out best and told him how she was involving others where she needed different abilities. This shift in Joan transformed her relationship with her boss and rippled into creating more meaningful conversations in every area of her life.

When people fight about something, the subject of the argument is rarely the real issue. The real issue is about vulnerability,

connectedness, safety, trust, or love—which are all emotional states. We connect with others authentically, with deep rapport and emotional safety, when we listen to ourselves well enough to tap into our own thoughts and feelings and share them in the moment. Then when we listen to others, we create the space for them to be here now, emotionally engaged. That’s being emotionally intelligent.

### **Emotional Wake and Changing the Focus**

An “emotional wake” is the feeling we leave people with. When we leave a meeting, are team members consistently feeling angry because they were not heard? Or are they feeling hopeful about what the team is working on? The predominant emotion we leave people with is our emotional wake.

Can you think of someone who creates a positive emotional wake? I bet someone comes to mind immediately. Being around that person feels good. Consciously or unconsciously, this person decided to be solution focused instead of problem focused in the face of change. Doing this creates respect for self and others.

Well-meaning colleagues or team members may want to dig a little for information by asking, “How is your boss?” when they know he is stressed due to recently announced changes. It is up to each of us to know ourselves and to know whether or not this is a topic we want to discuss now. If that is not where you want to take yourself emotionally at this time, it is no personal affront against the other person. Considering these options is being aware of your emotional wake. Be aware of your own needs and boundaries by being emotionally literate in the moment.

Having the emotional intelligence to deal with our own emotions first gives us the confidence and ability to navigate through the changes that are inevitable in our work and careers. We can experience an emotional hijack as a result of a change, or we can self-regulate and catch ourselves before we head into an emotional uproar. We can be aware of how other people’s emotions are impacting their ability to have a meaningful conversation during times of change. When we know how to pro-

cess ourselves and others through our emotions, we will be able to create more meaningful conversations consistently no matter how big the changes.

Here are some examples of how it sounds when people are able to understand the importance of their emotional wake and change a conversation's focus.

#### Scott and Alex

Scott and Alex met to discuss doing a deal together. Scott proposed some ideas that triggered the feeling of joy for Alex. Some of the symptoms of joy for Alex included being visibly excited, seeing lots of possibilities, imagining inevitable success, and ignoring red flags that might indicate a need to slow down and listen closely. Alex agreed to move forward with the project during their conversation due to the excitement he felt. Alex verbally committed to investing money and time in Scott's project.

Once back in his own office and the joyful feeling had passed, Alex was then able to think clearly and evaluate the key messages of Scott's proposal. He recognized questions he should have asked before agreeing to move forward. Alex wrote in his journal about the triggers and symptoms that the joy created in him so that next time he could catch himself before being caught up in the emotional rush. He decided the next time he felt that kind of joy, he was going to notice the feeling but not get so swept up in it that he agreed to spend money or time while in the first blush of the emotional high.

#### Bruno

In another situation with emotional implications, a well-respected and well-known pharmaceutical company had just announced that it would be laying off a large number of employees. As a result, one of the directors, Bruno, called me to discuss the fear he was feeling. This is how our conversation flowed:

**Bruno:** *As a result of the layoff announcement, I notice that my thinking is mistrustful of communication from leadership and peers. I am not sure whom to believe anymore. I am bouncing off the walls. I wonder if they*

*are considering eliminating my role and my team. I am afraid to speak to anyone.*

**Shawn:** *Feeling fear in this situation is normal, Bruno. As soon as we experience something that threatens our work, money, title, safety, family, or sense of self, it is normal to feel fear. What you are experiencing now are your symptoms of fear. It is useful to take a deep breath and observe your thoughts, body, and mood. When a crisis is occurring or perceived to be on the horizon, it can be difficult to create meaningful dialogue and new possibilities because we are not at our best. In my years of research and observation, it has become clear that every professional and every organization experiences problems that trigger fear. It is how we deal with fear that makes the difference. Can you think of a previous experience in which you felt fear and handled it well? Perhaps you created something even better for yourself and others?*

**Bruno:** *Yes.*

**Shawn:** *What did you do in that situation when you handled fear well and created something better from it?*

**Bruno:** *I talked openly to my manager about what I was experiencing; I looked him in the eye and asked him if he would keep me updated on what was happening. When he said he would, I felt better. I admitted that no one is in control of what will happen tomorrow. Also, I created a Plan B for myself. I thought out what I would do if I did not have the job, so that if I lost my job I'd have ideas about how to proceed and not go into shock or shut down.*

**Shawn:** *Is there a leader in the company you could reach out to and look in the eye to open a dialogue about your feelings, asking to use this situation as an opportunity to build trust?*

**Bruno:** *Yes, I can call her. Not sure she is in the office today, but I can reach out to initiate a conversation.*

**Shawn:** *Good. I look forward to hearing how that conversation goes. Bruno, this is also an opportunity for you to deepen the trust you have with your own team. What can you do for your team of employees, recognizing that some of them may be feeling fear too? What could you do to help them feel trust in your communication with them? How can you help to keep them focused on the current goals despite the emotional roller coaster they may be experiencing?*

**Bruno:** *I can't tell them that their jobs are safe since I do not know what is happening yet myself. But I can give them my word to communicate with them as soon as I am able to do so. I can also share with them what I am working on as my top priorities and ask them to tell me what they are focused on today. I can show respect for what they are experiencing by reaching out and listening rather than avoiding them. I can ask how I could be supportive today even though I do not have all the answers now.*

**Shawn:** *Sounds like a good next step. Bruno, you also mentioned when you handled a similar fear well in the past that you created a Plan B for yourself. Would you like to talk through your Plan B ideas after you have had some time to think about that? Would you begin to keep a list of creative options that you would explore if you were told that your position was being eliminated? It would be good for you if some of the ideas were playful too. What is a creative, fun option that comes to mind now? What would you enjoy creating?*

**Bruno:** *Well, I have wanted to go to Europe with my wife. I've noticed there are some great prices on cruises now, and just the other day we were talking about how much fun that would be. That idea does not take care of what I'd do for work, but it is fun to think about where we could go and what we'd do. I'd really like to do the Eastern Mediterranean cruise because each of those stops looks great. We also enjoy cruise ships with all the various forms of entertainment.*

**Shawn:** *Bruno, notice how your voice just changed. I bet you just slipped out of fear as you were speaking about that vacation.*

**Bruno:** *Yes, I did. I feel hopeful about having a great vacation.*

**Shawn:** *Are you willing to play with that idea a bit more today? It is from that hopeful energy that lots of new possibilities will flow that will help you see new ways to deal with your current situation.*

**Bruno:** *Yes, I already feel lighter. The reality is the same, but my thinking and feelings have shifted. I can see how I will be able to think about new creative ideas from this mindset. Thanks for helping me process myself through the initial fear reaction.*

Bruno realized that his own emotional awareness and his ability to move through fear are foundational to navigating the changes he is experiencing at work.

Collin and Jake

This next example of the importance of being aware of how our emotional wake impacts our conversations focuses on Collin, an environmental scientist for the Environmental Protection Agency. He was transferred into a new role that required his family to move across the country. His excitement about the new position was obvious. His new job was to be the backup technician for the other specialists in the lab. This new role required each of the team members to train Collin to use the instrumentation in their labs. Collin's new manager, Jake, asked the other team members to train Collin but did not offer any incentive for them to do so.

A few days after Jake asked the team members to train Collin, none of them had reached out to Collin to show him around their labs. Eager to be proactive, Collin went into Sue's lab and said he'd like to learn to use the equipment. She said, "No, this week isn't good for me. It would be best for you to go work with someone else. I don't need your help." Later, he overheard her say to another of the lab scientists, "I don't know why you would want to train someone else to do your job. I'm not going to teach Collin how to use my equipment so he can replace me or mess up my experiments when I am out of the lab." Sue and the other team members were feeling fear. Whenever fear takes over, thinking logic shuts down. As a result, none of the team members were eagerly inviting Collin into their lab.

Jake is a hands-off manager who does not appear to be aware that fear of Collin's real reason for being there is preventing progress. The team members are not feeling safe enough or emotionally literate enough to talk through their own fears. For Collin to be successful in his new role, he will have to be emotionally intelligent and use strong social skills to create a Conversation for Connection (see Chapter 5) that addresses their feelings and creates safety that he is not going to take their jobs or mess up their experiments. Collin also needs to create a conversation with Jake to share what he is experiencing and ask Jake to address the team members' fears and provide incentives for the lab technicians to include him.

Barry and Jamal

Barry is a project manager in a mid-sized company. He shared with me, “When speaking with someone who has significantly more experience and know-how in an area than I do, I’ve noticed sometimes that I hesitate to ask questions.” We discussed why this might be happening, and Barry was able to identify the underlying emotion—fear. Barry was able to point to a specific example when this happened recently. He was working with another project manager, Jamal, who had been developing a software design project for about a year. Barry had just joined the team and had six questions or points he did not understand after reading the current project plan. He was hesitant to ask Jamal about these. Barry was stuck in a conversation with himself thinking about the best way to ask Jamal so as not to annoy him or appear to be dumb.

Barry’s communication style causes him to prefer to verbalize his thinking in order to really understand what it is he is mulling over. As an extrovert, he has to say it out loud to know what he is really thinking and feeling. Barry realized that speaking about when he is jammed up or stuck emotionally makes all the difference. He talked this out with Ali, a colleague. She listened to him as he shared what he was thinking and how he was hesitating. That is when he was able to identify the underlying feeling as fear. He was then able to change his conversation to focus instead on what he wanted to create.

Ali asked great self-awareness questions like the ones shared earlier in the chapter about how to process yourself through an emotion. After Barry spoke with Ali, he realized he was unstuck. He saw clearly that he was choosing this emotional state of fear and that he could choose something else, like hope, which would be more productive in creating a motivating conversation with Jamal. Barry was then able to ask Jamal his questions without coming from a position of fear. This changed the outcomes he created with Jamal.

Moving past that fear gave Barry the confidence to ask more clarifying questions without worrying that he might appear



dumb or annoy Jamal. Barry said to me, “I’ve noticed recently I am now able to process myself through stuck spots like that. It’s as if I can hear the questions Ali would ask me and think it out or write it out in my journal.”

Emotions motivate our actions. When we identify what we are feeling in the moment, we can be self-aware and begin to regulate our emotions intentionally. This gives us the ability to catch ourselves and others when we are stuck. We can intentionally process ourselves and others through a stuck emotion that is holding us back. We are more productive in conversations when we know how to do this. Being aware of the emotional wake we are leaving with others creates better working relationships. When we know what motivates others, we can focus on creating conversations that will inspire and move toward creating the results we desire. Emotions and values are linked together because what we value will trigger our emotions. Our values guide where we want to focus our energy and what we want to talk about. It is this connection that we will explore next.