EPONAQUEST BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Productive Conversations to Preserve Relationships

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*Based on Bob Wall's book, *Coaching for Emotional Intelligence*

The following format is suggested for preparing to discuss difficult topics through short conversations that can make a big difference. This outline is helpful in organizing your thoughts so that you can be specific when speaking about something that is troubling you in relationship to another group member or faculty member.

1. **Opening Statement – General Description of the Topic**
   "I want to talk to you about…" (general subject related to the conflict).

   Example: I want to talk to you about how much time we each have to share our ideas in our small group.

2. **Observation – Specific Descriptions(s) of the Topic**
   "I've observed…" or "I've noticed…" (focus on the ***behavior*** – give details without judgment oriented statements. Remember, if you felt a strong emotion you are to use this as information and **only relay the information, not the emotion**. For instance, if you feel frustrated, the subject involves a block that needs to be worked through. If you were afraid, address safety issues.)

   Example: It is my observation that a lot of time is used talking about personal experiences or stories while we are trying to plan our workshop.

3. **Description of the Impact**
   "This is important because…" or "This resulted in…" (Describe the impact on the group, on getting the current job done well. Leave out any references to your own personal past.)"

   Example: This is important because our time to work on this together is limited, and it leaves us with insufficient time for discussing the plans for our workshop.

4. **Request or Suggestion**
   "In future, I would like you to …", or "it would be helpful to…" or "I'd like to request (suggest) that you…" (describe how to improve performance/behavior")

   Example: I'd like to request that we all agree to keep our focus on planning the workshop and save personal stories for another time.