

KEEP RIGHT Conversations

How to put yourself in a coaching mindset

Think of a recent conversation you had either at work or with a friend where you shared a challenge you were facing. What impact did it have on you when the other person spent most of the time allowing you to share, rather than the other way round?

Firstly, when we feel heard, when we have a sense someone is not just listening to respond but listening to understand and empathizing with what we are sharing, we get a sense of empowerment and engagement.

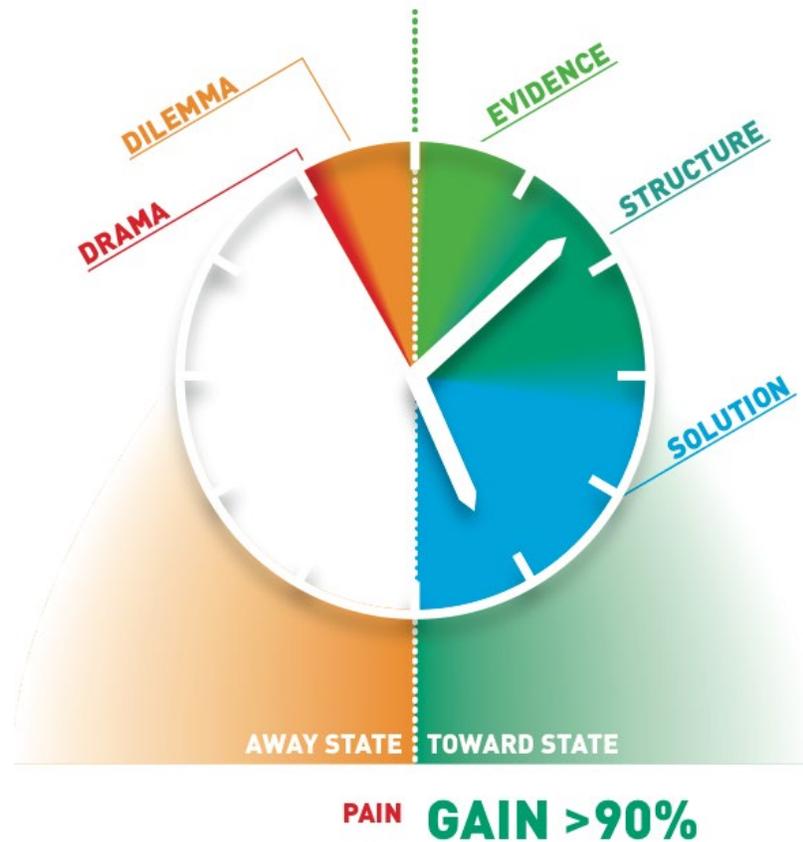
Secondly, when we get a sense of safety and trust with the listener, we are far more able to think clearly and pay attention to what is really at stake and what is wanted as a desired outcome.

In a Keep Right conversation, the listener focuses on creating a "toward state" for the speaker with the challenge – a brain state that is the reverse of fight, flight or freeze where stress dominates thinking. Instead, problem-solving is moved to a state of relaxation where positive neurochemicals are emitted, and breakthroughs can happen. The thinking brain can steer away from short term danger and move to a reward state where a clear structure, learning and positive solutions are the focus.

The temptation for the listener to investigate the challenge – so that you can advise on the ideal breakthrough – often gets in the way of helping others do it for themselves and building greater ownership and accountability.

The whole idea of the Keep Right conversation is for the breakthrough to happen in the other persons brain, not in yours! Our focus is to facilitate their best thinking rather than doing it for them.

When adopting a Keep Right mindset, we want to work to create breakthroughs in the other person's thinking rather than getting deeper and deeper into the challenge and getting stuck in the weeds. The more we focus on the problem and what's not working, the more we risk the thinker's cognitive abilities to be impaired by a threatened "away" state.



Here's how to steer the conversation into a "toward" state by keeping right:

- Build trust by helping them see the potential
- Ask questions to emphasize what the future solution looks like rather than tackling the present
- Focus on facts and evidence rather than stories that might be made up or belief systems that aren't necessary true
- Listen actively with curiosity from their perspective
- Open the door to new thinking or perspectives in support of breakthrough
- Always move the conversations towards the desired outcome

When listening actively, we can direct the conversation in three ways to the right:

Evidence – We are listening for evidence of how the other person is thinking and feeling. In other words, our first task is to use our listening to understand how the individual sees the world around them so that we can help them more effectively to generate their own solutions. We actively put ourselves in their brain, in their shoes and challenge whether their beliefs are really true, what evidence they have and what belief would be more useful.

Structure – We are also listening within a conversation structure that is designed to fast track to breakthroughs. This focuses our listening so that we are more likely to notice what's most relevant to achieving the desired outcome from either the immediate conversation, or a longer-term goal. Here we ask questions from a perspective of various options, timelines, perspectives, steps in the process of getting to the solution.

Solution – We are also listening for the individual's potential to achieve the solution they have identified. We support them in thinking out of the box, focusing on the ideal outcome, what's beyond the possible, what are the benefits and ripple effects once this has been solved and what other ways of thinking from a different perspective.