



Talking in the Grey

Addressing Ambiguity in Professional Conversations

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Presenters



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****The names and likenesses of certain individuals have been changed to protect their privacy.****



Agenda

- Understanding Talking in the Grey
- Approaches to tackle it
- Illustrative examples
- Essential elements

The What

What is 'Talking in the Grey'?

- **Talking in the Grey** refers to navigating conversations that lack clear-cut answers, involve ambiguity, or require balancing multiple perspectives.
- **Crucial Conversations** refers to high-stakes discussions where opinions differ, emotions run strong, and the outcome significantly impacts relationships or results.

EXAMPLES

I. Project Handover

- Scope gaps / Financial Problems
- Timeline / Milestone Misalignment
- Other Operational Risks

II. Performance Reviews

- Unclear Expectations
- Unclear Development Path
- Avoiding Feedback

III. Leadership Presentation

- Ambiguous plan
- Opaque Decision-Making Process
- Hesitant feedback

IV. Colleague Disagreement

- Field Knowledge vs Contract
- Personality clashes
- Opposing ideals on what's right

The Why

Why would anyone operate with ambiguity?

I. Fear

- Fear of the other person(s)
- Fear of potential repercussions

II. Uncertainty

- You don't know what the result will be
- You've never addressed it before

III. Doubt

- You doubt you'll get the desired outcome
- So why even try

The How

The steps to addressing the ambiguity

- I. Address the problem ASAP
 - Consider proper setting/environment
 - Who should be there? Where should the conversation take place?
- II. Specific data to explain why you see what you see
 - Articulate the facts
 - Remove potential obstacles to an honest exchange
 - Build and maintain mutual trust – Remain genuine, while being deliberate
- III. Verify understanding while remaining Goal-Focused
 - “Make it safe”
 - “Maintain mutual respect and mutual purpose”

General Best Practices

- **Lead by Example:** Leadership should model transparency by sharing relevant information, owning up to mistakes, and demonstrating accountability.
- **Use Technology:** Leverage tools like project management platforms, dashboards, or internal communication apps to make information easily accessible.
- **Set Transparency Goals:** Make transparency part of the organizational culture by including it in the mission statement and tracking it as a measurable goal.
- “The shortest distance between you and your goals is the Truth”



Thank you!

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