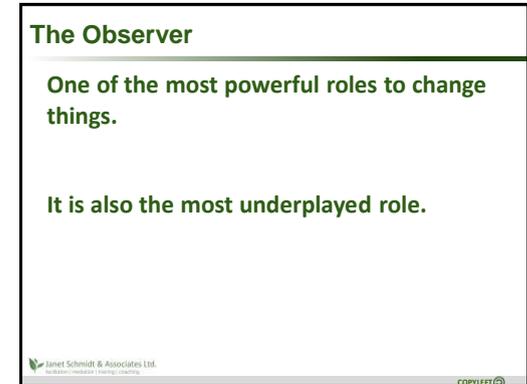




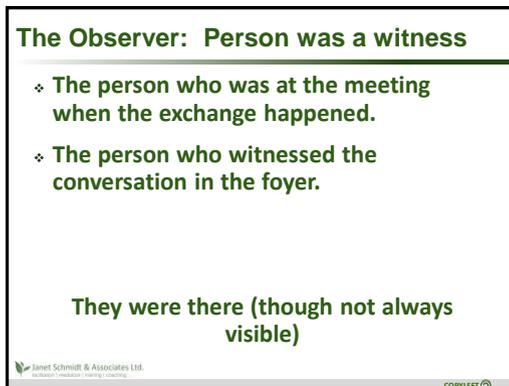
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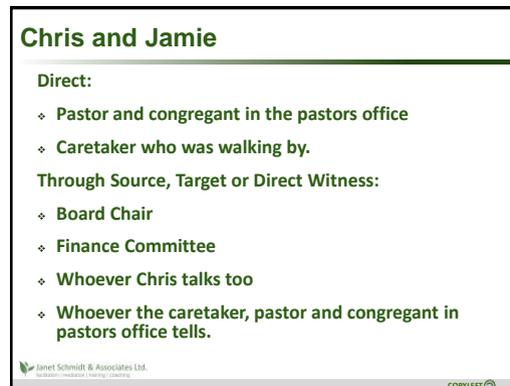
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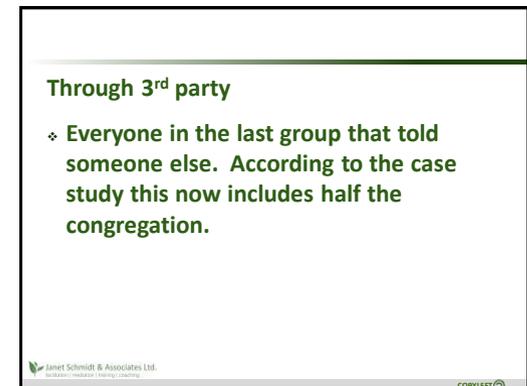
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5



6

## Fact

**60% of conversations between adults is about people who are not present.**

**It is not all evaluative.**

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## Gossip is...

- ❖ Talking about another person in a way that you wouldn't if they were present
- ❖ Saying things that you haven't said directly to them.
- ❖ Taking about another person that makes you right and better than them.

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## What is your goal as an Observer?

The matter gets resolved which includes:

- ❖ Source takes responsibility
- ❖ The Target addressing concern with the source
- ❖ Stories don't spread and reputations get hurt.
- ❖ The underlying concern that precipitated the disrespect gets resolved.
- ❖ People not involved stop talking about it.

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## What is the problem in Jamie/Chris

- ❖ The exchange (incident of disrespect)
- ❖ Clarification of roles
- ❖ How to manage change processes
- ❖ Possibly Chris's confidence or ability to learn new things.
- ❖ Chris responding to both email and time to meet with Jamie.

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## Observer Practice (2)

In Pairs (reverse roles)

1. You are a member of the congregation. You have heard something about the buzz but not much.
2. Another congregant comes to you and says something like...

**Chris supporter:** Did you hear what Jamie did to Chris last week? Can you believe it. Apparently, Jamie has not even apologized. Somebody needs to talk to them. This is unacceptable!

**Jamie Supporter:** Chris is hopeless. Jamie is finally doing some great work and there Chris goes again blocking progress. How long have they worked here? We need to address this issue?

1. You respond in a constructive way. Clarifying intention and identifying what they or both of you can do to support resolution.

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## Other Ideas

- ❖ Sometimes if you just listen you are seen to be communicating agreement/rightness.
- ❖ Why are you telling me this? What are you hoping that I will do?
- ❖ The problem with hearing one side of the story you don't know what is fact and what is made up stories (that the talker believes to be true).

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## The PERSON in AUTHORITY p. 95



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## You said....

- ❖ Ask parties what's going on from their perspective. "I noticed (X behavior). Will you share what's happening?" i.e. a gentle ask, since the Source may not be aware of how they are coming off in the interaction.
- ❖ Question may be asked in two timeframes. In the moment, is there something that can be done? OR after reflection, and identifying a behavior as disrespectful, what is an appropriate after response.
- ❖ Most responses will be after the fact (a) to allow recognition, inquiry, and analysis to take place and (b) to deal 1 on 1 with the individuals involved.

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## Three contexts

1. **You were there and witnessed the event.**
2. **The Source, Target or Observer approached you about the problem interaction.**
3. **Someone who has been told about the situation came to you to let you know. (In certain systems this happens after many others know).**

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## Who is the Person in Authority?

- ❖ The Chair
- ❖ The Pastor
- ❖ Jamie: The Finance Committee Chair
- ❖ The Board
- ❖ Chris (Admin person)
- ❖ Informal Leaders (moral authority)

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## Congregants Expectations

- ❖ In the Jamie and Chris situation – or moments of conflict in the church. What do you need to know? What do you want the people in authority to do?
- ❖ How can you support this? What do you need to do? What do you need to NOT do?

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## What is your goal?

- ❖ **Source** takes responsibility and **apologizes** to the Target and Observer
- ❖ **Target approaches** the source to address their concern.
- ❖ **Observer either stops talking** about it or **talks to the source** about what they witnessed disrespected.
- ❖ **Observer (who heard about it)** To assure them that you will address the situation, thank them for giving you a heads up and ask them not to talk about it.

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## Person with Responsibility

To address the situation which includes both the eruption of conflict but equally important the root cause.

**It is not your fault but it is your responsibility to address the situation.**

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**“Power is always relevant, the person who has it discounts it and the person who doesn’t have it is always aware of it.”**

Jonathan Segal (employment lawyer)

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## Move to Coaching p. 93

1. Vent – invite the person to speak, listening actively and with empathy
2. Clarify – name the issues you hear the person raising that s/he needs to resolve.
3. Imagine – Highlight the interests and goals that the person has in the situation to help broaden their imagination of how the conflict could be resolved.
4. Choose – Explore what the person feels/thinks is the best approach (e.g. talk about it, mediate it, go to a higher authority) for dealing with this conflict or problem.
5. Prepare – Coach the person to prepare him/her for the next steps.
6. Follow Up – Check in with the person to see how it is going.

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## Person in Authority

Explain your intent (or they will make it up):

- ❖ I want a healthy faith community. This means we can deal with these moments.
- ❖ I have responsibility to address this issue and support everyone through these moments.
- ❖ You are an important, valued member of the community and I don’t want drama for any of us.
- ❖ Other....

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**Whatever Authority you have, what are you doing to support the positive resolution?**

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## Questions about STOP?

- ❖ Source
- ❖ Target
- ❖ Observer
- ❖ Person in Authority

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# Break!



Always treat your community members exactly as you want them to treat those you are inviting into your community

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## DEFENSIVENESS

By Janet Schmidt

courageous conversations

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## Defensiveness p. 107



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## Topics Covered

CONTEXT: a personal case study

- ❖ Understanding how defensiveness works and its triggers
- ❖ How we encounter defensiveness
- ❖ Identify and explore internal and external causes of defensiveness
- ❖ Look at our own defensive responses
- ❖ The antidote to defensiveness.
- ❖ Identify concrete strategies to respond to a person who is being defensive

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## Case Study (part 1) p. 118

- ❖ Think about a recent conversation where you felt defensive.
- ❖ What happened in your body (at that moment)?
- ❖ What did the other person say/do that triggered that feeling?
- ❖ Why did you feel defensive? How did you interpret (make meaning) in the situation?

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## Defensive Behavior?

1. Someone has been falsely accused and is defending their good name.
2. Someone is guilty and trying to cover up.
3. There is a grain of truth in the comment or accusation.

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## and.....

- ❖ We are embarrassed
- ❖ We are humiliated or feel stupid or like we failed
- ❖ We don't see ourselves that way
- ❖ We are reminded of earlier negative experiences
- ❖ We feel forced to make a change, and change is difficult
- ❖ Other....

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How long does it take for you to get defensive?

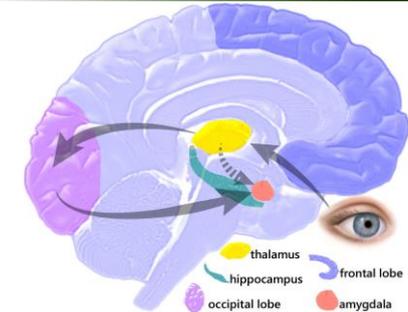
How many people on earth do you think get defensive?

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## Amygdala Hijack p. 108



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## The Drugs....

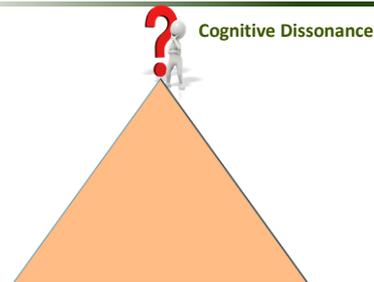
- ❖ **Dopamine** and **corticotropin** to activate the sympathetic nervous system.
- ❖ **Corticotropin** further activates the pituitary gland to release the **adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)**.
- ❖ **ACTH** then activates the sympathetic nervous system that stimulates the adrenal glands to produce **cortisol** and **adrenaline**.

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## Pyramid of Choice



Mistakes Were Made (but not by me). Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, Harcourt, 2007

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## What is Cognitive Dissonance?

- ❖ Dissonance occurs when there are two attitudes or an attitude and behaviour that conflict.
- ❖ This feeling of dissonance causes discomfort and depending on the larger context can be extremely disorienting (and even painful).

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## Two Contexts....

1. When you have invested time, money, reputation, effort, or pain in some activity or some belief that turns out to be wrong or baseless or foolish.
  - ❖ The world will end on December 21, 2012
  - ❖ Keith Ranieri - NXIVM
  - ❖ I smoke, overeat, drink too much or don't exercise and research says that I am actively contributing to my untimely and painful death.

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## Context 2

2. When a central element of our self concept is threatened i.e. *competent, good, hard working*. The more important the belief is to us, the more central to our self identify and self worth, the harder it will be to accept dissonance information.

The brain is wired to look for information to confirm what we believe and to ignore or forget or overlook information that disconfirms what we believe.

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Most people have a reasonably positive self-concept, believing themselves to be competent, moral, and smart. Their efforts at reducing dissonance will be designed to preserve their positive self-image.

Mistakes Were Made (but not by me), Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, Harcourt, 2007

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## Sigmund & Anna Freud

- ❖ Sigmund Freud coined the term 'defense mechanisms'.
- ❖ Defensiveness attempts to ward off anxiety against an 'unbearable idea'.
- ❖ The mechanism is an attempt to stop the pain. "I never did anything wrong."

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An 'unbearable idea' is one, whether conscious or unconscious, that makes us unacceptable to ourselves.

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## Three Core Identities

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. I am competent.      | 1. Am I competent?      |
| 2. I am a good person.  | 2. Am I a good person?  |
| 3. I am worthy of love. | 3. Am I worthy of love? |

NOTE the ALL or NONE THINKING

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen Penguin, 1999

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## Competence

I am good teacher, I have been a good teacher for 25 years.

I was just got told by the principal that parents have been complaining about my teaching for years.

Both can not be true

Therefore they are trying to push me out and are being ageist!

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## Good Person

I am a good person

I just yelled at that person

Both cannot be true, therefore

- ❖ They made me do it
- ❖ Or, I was just having a bad day.

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## Worthy of Love

Fear: "I am unlovable or unacceptable?"

Brene Brown on her Ted Talk on Vulnerability says that shame comes from a fear of disconnection and a belief that I am not worthy of connection.

A sense of worthiness means that I believe that I am worthy of love and belonging.

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## During the George W Bush Jr and John Kerry Election (2004)

- ❖ MRI (Magnetic resonance imaging) while trying to process dissonant or consonant information about their choice.
- ❖ Reasoning areas of the brain virtually shut down when participants were confronted with dissonant information
- ❖ Emotion circuits of the brain lit up happily when consonance was restored.

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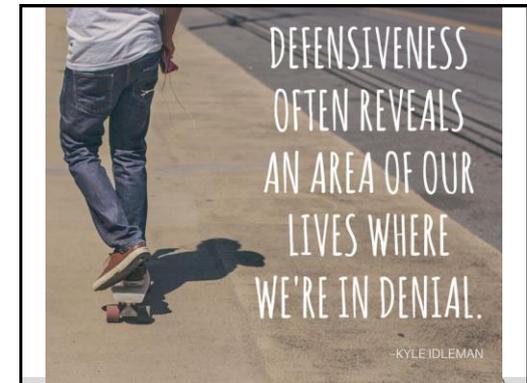
## Case Study continued (2)

1. **Back to why are we defensive?**
  - ❖ We have been falsely accused and need to defend our good name.
  - ❖ Someone is guilty and trying to cover up.
  - ❖ There is a grain of truth in the comment or accusation.
2. **How did you experience cognitive dissonance in your scenario?**
3. **What core identity is being challenged?**

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### So how does this all work together:

Someone gives me feedback to improve.

**Cognitive Dissonance** – My internal identity determines a threat (unconscious)

**Physiology** – my brain puts my body into action to save my life (automatic)

And I get ready to run for my life (flight) or destroy the threat (fight)

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### Typical Responses

1. **Surrender**
  - ❖ Giving in, blaming yourself, making excuses for other
2. **Withdraw (flight)**
  - ❖ Avoiding talking about it
3. **Counterattack (fight)**
  - ❖ Responding by making excuses
  - ❖ Attacking the other person's position

Taking the War Out of Our Words by Sharon Strand Ellision

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### Frequent Defensive Responses...

1. **“But you don’t understand...”**
2. **“It’s not my fault...”**
3. **“No one else does it” or “I’m not the only one”**
4. **“You didn’t...”**
5. **“They are out to get me.”**

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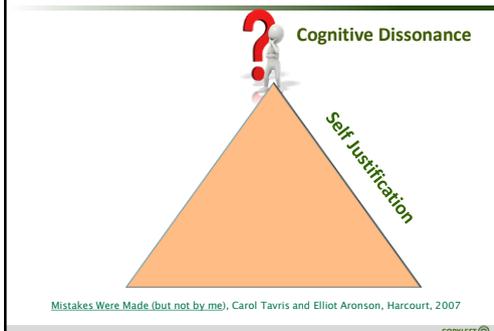
### Common Defensive Mechanisms

- ❖ Sarcasm
- ❖ Catastrophizing
- ❖ Rigidity
- ❖ Trivializing
- ❖ Blaming
- ❖ Endless explaining
- ❖ Shaming
- ❖ Withdrawing into silence
- ❖ Teaching
- ❖ Loss of humour
- ❖ Preaching
- ❖ All-or-nothing thinking

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### Pyramid of Choice



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### The Blame Game....

**Yes I did it  
BUT  
it is not my fault.**

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## “They started it.”

The “eternally popular dissonance reducer”

What clever story is this? The victim, villain, or helpless story?

Mistakes Were Made (but not by me). Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, Harcourt, 2007

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## Case Study continued (3)

- ❖ What did you do in response to the situation?
- ❖ How do you see yourself using blame and self-justification?
- ❖ What are some of your well used defensive strategies/mechanisms?
  
- ❖ What are the consequences of these strategies?
- ❖ What is something you could take responsibility for?

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## The WHAT and HOW FACTORS

- ❖ You can't remove the defensiveness factor. People will be defensive just because of WHAT you are communicating and their subsequent internal dialogue.
  
- ❖ What you do control is HOW the message is communicated. The HOW factor can significantly impact the amount of defensiveness the person will experience.

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## The Gibb Categories of DEFENSIVE and SUPPORTIVE Behaviors

Defensive Behaviors	Supportive Behaviors
1. Evaluation	1. Description
2. Control	2. Problem Orientation
3. Strategy	3. Spontaneity
4. Neutrality	4. Empathy
5. Superiority	5. Equality
6. Certainty	6. Provisionalism

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## Before A Difficult Conversation

Step 1: Change your story.

Step 2: Name the action (as a fact)

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“The truth is that many confrontations fail not because others are bad and wrong but because we handle them poorly.” p. 46

Crucial Confrontations by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, McGraw Hill, 2005

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## Remember....

**Process trumps content**

Put another way....

**It is often not the what it is the how.**

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## Defensiveness lingers....

That energy surge from our heightened state of readiness (adrenalin) takes 20 minutes to 1 hour to dissipate. During that time people will not be able to think clearly. The time becomes even longer if someone does something to keep it going. Which is usually what happens.

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## Managing Your Defensiveness

**If they are defensive, odds are they will say or do something that will trigger your defensiveness and then there are two or more people who are defensive!**

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## In Summary.....

**Self justification comes from our need to defend ourselves and reduce the discomfort of 'cognitive dissonance'.**

**This is accompanied with the adrenalin that is coursing through our veins and expressing itself in our tone and body language.**

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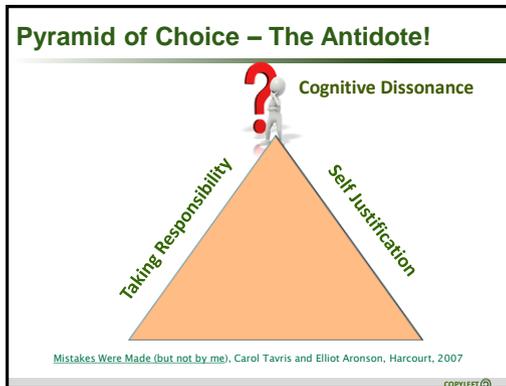
## Problems with Defensiveness

- ❖ **Creates a barrier in communication**
- ❖ **Adds another issue to the agenda**
- ❖ **Takes precedence over other issues**
- ❖ **Presents an obstacle in resolving conflict and performance issues**
- ❖ **Damages relationships and breeds mistrust**

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### Why don't we admit our mistakes?

1. **We aren't aware that we need to.**  
"What mistake? I didn't make a mistake."
2. **Our culture is mistake-phobic, linking mistakes with incompetence and stupidity that will be punished.**

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### Three things to Accept about Yourself

1. **You will make mistakes**
2. **Your intentions are complex**
  - Conscious
  - Less conscious
  - Unconscious
3. **You have contributed to the problem**

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### Reasons to admit your mistakes

- ❖ You will probably be found out anyway
- ❖ You will learn and grow
- ❖ You undoubtedly did something that resulted in making the situation worse
- ❖ You can lead by example
- ❖ People will like you more

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### N. Wayne Hale Jr. (Launch Integrity mgr NASA, 2003)

"I had the opportunity and the information and I failed to make use of it. I don't know what an inquest or court of law would say, but I stand condemned in the court of my own conscience to be guilty of not preventing the Columbia disaster. We could discuss the particulars: inattention, incompetence, distraction, lack of conviction, lack of understanding, a lack of backbone, laziness. The bottom line is that I failed to understand what I was being told. I failed to stand up and be counted. Therefore look no further; I am guilty of allowing the Columbia to crash."

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### The irony

"The mind wants to protect itself from the pain of dissonance with the balm of self-justification, but the soul wants to confess." (p. 217)

Mistakes Were Made (but not by me), Carol Travis and Elliot Aronson, Harcourt, 2007

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### So if YOU are defensive....

1. Notice the energy surge of adrenalin as quickly as possible and talk yourself back into the neo cortex. Ask yourself, what part of this is true?
2. Take a breathe, talk yourself down (in your head).
3. If it is not obvious, ask them questions about their concern or issue. Seek to understand (you don't have to agree).
4. If you find it difficult to stay in the conversation, ask the person for some time to reflect on what they are saying and arrange a time to get back to them.

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5. Personally reflect on your 'unbearable idea' of competence, good person, worthy of love. "If it was true, what would it mean about you?"
6. Analyze the situation. Is there something you can own? Did you miss something? Could you have done it better? Were you late?
7. Come back to the conversation and take 100% responsibility for your part. Identify any other aspects to the situation that may also need to be addressed. (If it is a misunderstanding and you are completely innocent. Share your explanation.)

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### So if THEY are defensive....

1. Set aside what you are talking about.
2. Listen to their emotions: their fears, needs, hopes, disappointments.
3. Paraphrase what you have heard (i.e. their fears, needs, wants and hopes). For example, "You need me know that you spent a lot of time on the project."
4. Address their 'unbearable idea' of competence, good person, worthy of love. "You have been a great asset to the team." "I know it is important for you to serve clients well."

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### Continued.....

5. Replace 'meaning making' accusations (i.e. controlling, bully, disrespectful, ist) with the facts.
6. Observe what you see, patterns of defensiveness in the conversation.
7. If it is targeted at you, take responsibility for something (i.e. "In retrospect I could have shared that with you earlier.")
8. Give them follow up assignments that get them thinking more deeply (may want to follow up with an email).

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### Case Study continued (4)

- ❖ As you look at the whole case study, where you experienced defensiveness, your cognitive dissonance, your reaction, etc. Any thoughts/observations?
- ❖ If you had realized what was going on, what could you have done differently?
- ❖ What are possible next steps (come up with at couple of options)?

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### And what makes all of this work?



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## Affirmation p. 122

Most of us don't hear enough affirmation. An important principle in talking about difficult stuff is the importance of giving positive feedback. In essence catching people getting it right. Research studies show that there should be more affirmation than correction.

The focus on strength based tools is an attempt to address our silence and over focus on the negative.

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## Creating a Great Faith Community

What else is required for your area to be a great place to work, the best workplace culture you have worked in?

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## The Affirmation (+) Conversation p.122

1. Check-in ("Do you have a minute?")
2. Name your action (and praise/thank person)
3. Let the person respond (get information)
4. Share the effect: on you, others, team name (let them know why it worked)
5. Clarify expectation in future
6. Problem solve (what the source or target will do next)
7. Close (gracefully)

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## And No Matter Where You Are At



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## Aspirations

- ♦ **Deeply Connected:** We strive to foster healthy relationships amongst and within UU communities, with the broader world and with all life.
- ♦ **Radically Inclusive:** We strive to create hospitable, diverse, multi-generational communities.
- ♦ **Actively Engaged:** We strive to work joyfully for a just and compassionate society, experimenting with new forms of community.
- ♦ **Theologically Alive:** We seek to be ever-evolving in our understanding, open to new knowledge.
- ♦ **Spiritually Grounded:** We seek transformation through personal spiritual experiences and shared ritual.

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## Why?

What's in it for you, your fellow congregants and the First Unitarian Church - if the group become more effective at being a **responsible source**, a **courageous target**, a **gutsy observer** and an **accountable Person in Authority**?

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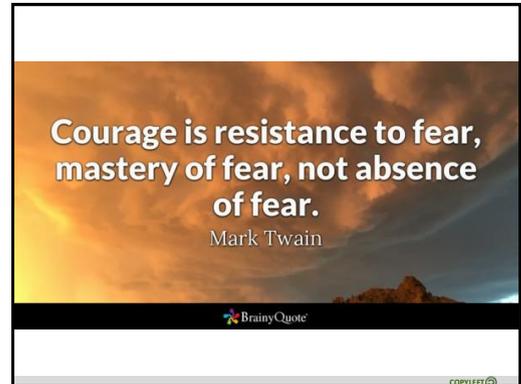
## Malala Yousafzai

- ❖ "I am stronger than fear."
- ❖ "We were scared but our fear was not as strong as our courage."

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HERSCHEY, PENNSYLVANIA 17033-0001

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life shrinks

or expands

in proportion

to one's

courage

(anaïs nin)

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## THANK YOU

How to get better at these moments:

- ❖ Review the manual, especially at moments of disrespect.
- ❖ Do your spiritual practice and reflect on your own responses and what drives them.
- ❖ Practice your skills and support each other in that effort.
- ❖ Use each other to coach you through a conversation.

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