



NAVIGATING MEANINGFUL PARENT TEACHER COMMUNICATION

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The NEW YORK TIMES Business Bestseller

YOUR BOSS ■ YOUR SPOUSE ■ YOUR FRIENDS
YOUR KIDS ■ YOUR CLIENTS

Difficult Conversations

HOW TO DISCUSS
WHAT MATTERS MOST



DOUGLAS STONE ■ BRUCE PATTON ■ SHEILA HEEN
OF THE HARVARD NEGOTIATION PROJECT

With a foreword by Roger Fisher, coauthor of GETTING TO YES

DEALING WITH STRONG EMOTIONS

Dear Strangers,

My Choices
as a Mother
are not
Open for Debate.

Love,
Mothers Everywhere

- *Managing our feelings during a conversation can be very challenging (especially when dealing with children!) and can make it difficult to communicate.*
- *Sometimes it can be hard to express strong emotions and sometimes it can be hard not to.*
- *Sometimes our feelings make it difficult to truly listen to what someone else is saying.*

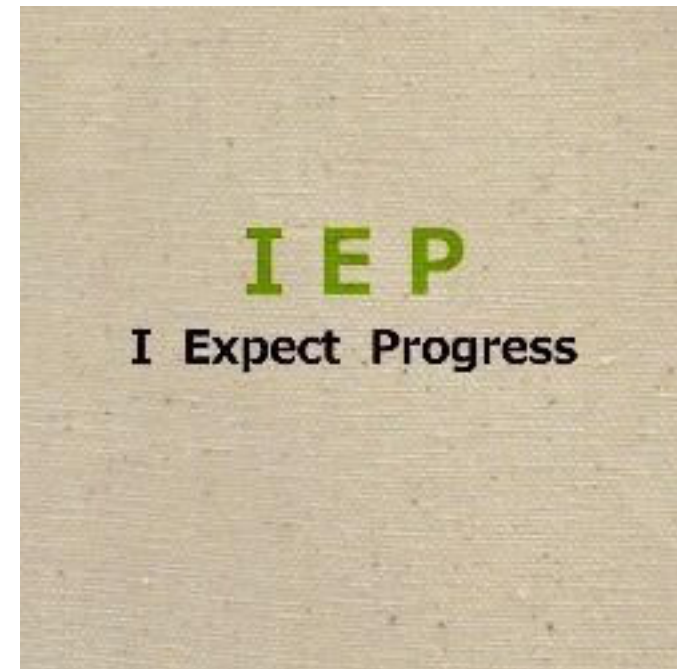
HOLDING ON TO MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

*You don't have to
agree with me,
but it's quicker.*

- *Each of us sees the world differently and each of us has different information and experiences.*
- *Even when we have the same exact information, we can interpret it in completely different ways based on our past experiences and values.*
- *Arguing blocks us from understanding the other person's story and experience.*

DISENTANGLING INTENTIONS FROM IMPACT

- *We make an attribution about the other person's intentions based on the impact on us. But, intentions are invisible.*
- *We tend to assume the worst and these assumptions are often wrong.*
- *Intentions are very important because they strongly influence our judgement of others. We might attribute bad intentions to bad character.*
- *But, good intentions don't sanitize bad impacts.*



PLACING BLAME AND DECIDING WHO IS RIGHT

- *No one wants to be blamed so trying to determine blame raises everyone's anxiety.*
- *Focusing on blame also stands in the way of trying to learn what is really causing the problem and to do anything meaningful to correct it.*
- *Difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right. They are not about what is true, they are about what is important.*

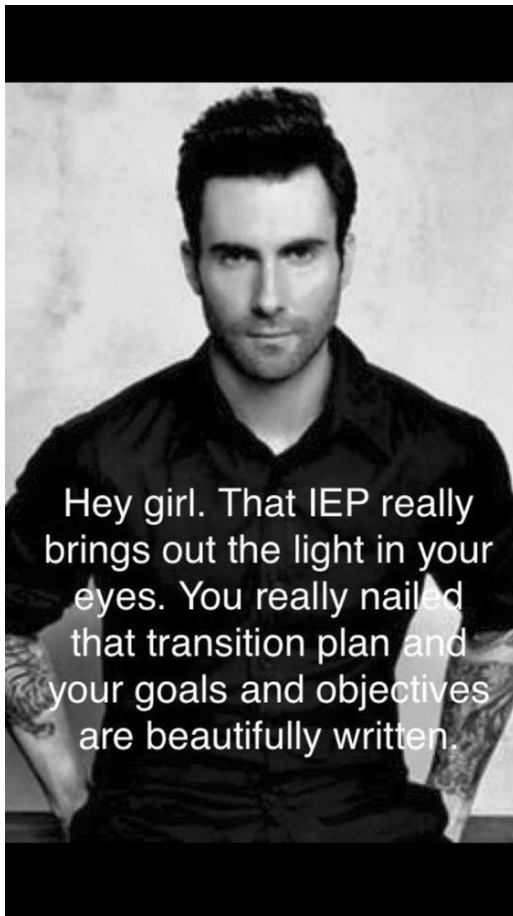


MOVING AHEAD AFTER A CONVERSATION BLOWS UP


- *Sometimes, despite our best efforts, things don't go well or go very poorly.*
- *We often want things to go perfectly, but this is not realistic.*
- *Moving ahead takes courage, openness and a willingness to try again (sometimes the hardest part).*
- *Difficult conversations are ongoing and evolving. Things almost never resolve in one sitting when the stakes are high.*
- *Trust evolves over time.*

It doesn't have to
be perfect,
just really close
to perfect.
It basically needs
to be perfect.
Never mind, I'll do it.

TRY NOT TO TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY!



- Maintaining a sense of humor and having some moments of levity help us keep perspective and remember we are all human!



Personal experiences and challenges?
Question, comments, other thoughts?