

## Learning to Ask Ourselves Questions: Preparing for Difficult Conversations



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### Preparing for Challenging Conversations

- *Conventional Process:* Focuses on family/participants, details of case, “what to say,” or how to persuade/convince (or techniques to guarantee good outcome)
- *Reflective Process:* Focuses on ourselves, our feelings and attitudes before the event, ways we might influence the conversation (for better or for worse)

### Goals of Reflective Process

*Explore our emotions and mindset, in order to*

- Discharge emotions
- Become aware of hot button issues
- Become aware of strengths

*So that we*

- Remove obstacles we might inadvertently bring to conversation
- Clarify our intentions
- Prepare ourselves to be present, calm, and focused in conversation

### Reflective Process--Method (Writing or Discussing, Alone or With Others)

- Ask questions that allow feelings and ideas to emerge
- Follow what comes up, without censorship or judgment
- Look for points that “ring true” and stand out
- Summarize/organize what you learn

### Questions I Ask Myself (Examples)

- What do I feel as I think about this conversation?
- What associations do I have (people, events)?
- What might push my buttons?
- What do I fear might happen?
- What do I want to have happen?
- What responses (in me/from me) might hinder the exchange? Help it?

### **Consider Hot Button Issues (Examples)**

- Ending up responsible for too much
- Being angry at someone involved
- Making a mistake
- Feeling inadequate
- Being witness to bad services/parenting
- Being reminded (unpleasantly) of someone you know
- Seeing how unfair the world is

### **How Does This Process Help?**

- Discharge emotions (start from a more even keel)
- Become alert to challenges (be better prepared to what might set you off)
- Once you calm down, you prepare better (more objective, more realistic)
- Engage in conversation with proper focus – on family's needs (not yours)
- Self-monitor better during conversation (know what to pay attention to in yourself)

### **To Focus and Support Your Reflective Process**

- Write out your feelings and observations
- Talk through the process with a colleague
- Have group reflective sessions to prepare (stay focused! Avoid group rants...)

### **“How do I learn more?” “Where can I find guidance?”**

- 1) Go to *The Reflective Writer* at <http://www.therefectivewriter.com>. You can also find *The Reflective Writer* on Facebook! Come “like” the page and you can easily communicate with Judy Stone-Goldman. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Reflective-Writer/121897679668>
- 2) E-mail Judy directly at [jstonegoldman@gmail.com](mailto:jstonegoldman@gmail.com)
- 3) See article by Judy Stone-Goldman (March 2011), “Reflective Writing for Personal-Professional Balance,” *Perspectives on Administration and Supervision*, 21:23-29 (SID 11 publication, find on-line at [www.asha.org/publications/](http://www.asha.org/publications/)). Includes references on reflective practice and instructions for reflective writing.

*Have questions or comments?  
Feel free to e-mail me or send me a message on Facebook!*

*- Judy Stone-Goldman*