

## Leading Difficult Conversations

LEAD6211

### Course Outline (online)

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**Description:** Having difficult conversations is part of every leadership position. Learn to approach the toughest conversations with confidence by developing skills to move past emotion and deliver your message clearly and positively.

#### Topics:

- Why we need to have difficult conversations
- Contrasting assertive and non-assertive approaches using the Interpersonal Influencing Inventory
- When not to be assertive
- Assertive communication including 'I' statements
- Responding to others assertively
- Reducing defensiveness with open questions
- The focused conversation method (ORID)
- The power of a positive no

**Course Goals:** To create greater comfort with initiating, and engaging in, difficult conversations, by learning how to structure the conversation, how to reduce defensiveness in others, and how to deliver one's own message.

#### Course Objectives

At the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Consider what makes a conversation difficult for you
- Choose when to speak up and when to be agreeable, skip it or temporarily defer
- Differentiate among assertive, aggressive and passive approaches
- Say what you know to be true but not more than you know to be true using 'I' statements
- Ask questions without causing defensiveness
- Structure conversations using findings from neuroscience
- Say 'no' when appropriate while remaining positive
- Approach difficult conversations with courage and humility

**Evaluation:** This is a graded course where a Complete or Incomplete will be issued. In order to receive a completion for this course, a student must:

- Students are required to **attend a minimum of three of four** Zoom sessions (and watch the Zoom video of the session they did not attend, if any).
- Complete a minimum of three out of four assignments to demonstrate skills presented by the course
- Participate in forum group discussions. (The minimum level of participation is nine posts spread over at least three weeks)
- Do a weekly quiz based on the Zoom session and videos for that week and score at least 75%.

This course outline is a sample only and is subject to change.

# Western Continuing Studies

## **Code of Student Conduct**

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>

## **How often will the instructor communicate with me?**

Questions posted in the general discussion forum or by message will receive a reply within two business days. In addition, the instructor will be available to answer students' questions immediately following the Zoom sessions each week.

## **When will I receive my grades?**

Final grades will be available 2 weeks after the last scheduled day of the course. A grade report can be printed from myWCS.

## **How do I hand in assignments?**

All assignments will be submitted electronically through OWL using the assignment tool. The due dates for assignments are shown as the end of the week. However, if you require flexibility, any assignment they can be submitted as late as the last day of the course.

## **Course Schedule:**

Four consecutive weeks:

- Attend 90 minute weekly Zoom (Zoom calls will be recorded).
- Assignments and forum discussions are geared to weekly topics so students are expected to spend 90-120 minutes each week at times of their choosing each week.

Week 1

- What factors make some conversations difficult and what constitutes a difficult conversation for you
- Interpersonal Influencing Inventory (online self-assessment)
- Contrasting Assertive Approaches to Non-Assertive Approaches
- Dare to Lead online self-assessment

Week 2

- When not to be assertive
- 'I' statements contrasted to common non-assertive communication approaches
- Discussion of Daring Greatly Leadership assessment
- The Power of a Positive No
- Other assertiveness tools
- Open versus closed questions

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# Western Continuing Studies

## Week 3

- How to reduce defensiveness by either avoiding asking questions or asking open questions
- The four level discussion method (ORID). Structure conversations to avoid problems
- CHEAPVIN – questions that get to the heart of the issue
- Plan a difficult conversation that you will have next week

## Week 4

- 'Clear is Kind'. Showing courage and generosity in difficult conversations
- Responding to other assertively
- Course Recap

### **Evaluation Method:**

As part of the course/instructor evaluation, a survey will be sent to you electronically by Continuing Studies. You will be asked the following questions. Please consider these throughout the course.

1. How would you rate your overall experience?
2. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:
  - a. The course content was relevant and valuable.
  - b. The instructor conducted class sessions in an organized, well-planned manner.
  - c. The instructor explained concepts clearly.
  - d. The instructor displayed enthusiasm and energy in conducting class sessions.
  - e. The instructor made me feel comfortable in the learning environment.
  - f. The instructor encouraged my participation and interaction.