



Conversations

Underlying principles

- Conversations are actions and they make possible a future that otherwise would not exist. We coordinate action in language by making offers, promises, requests, as well as declining. All of these moves lead to creation of that which did not exist prior to the conversation.
- Different kinds of conversations require different moves in language and in body.
- Conversations have moods in them. Conversations evoke certain states or, you might say, require certain states for them to be effective or optimally effective.

Conversations for Relationship

This is the first conversation you ever have with someone. Hello, how are you? Who are you? In this conversation you ask questions, are curious: what do they do for a living, are they married, what matters to them, etc. In these conversations you are looking for common ground. Are you in the same tribe or not, do they feel right, do you relax around them or not, do you feel good or wish to move away. In these conversations we are collecting TONS of data, absorbing and usually judging like crazy though pretending we are not. We walk away from these conversations saying I like that person or she is weird or whatever fundamental assessment we have already made about the person. We either want more relatedness or less.

Then, once we are in relationship (or not), we continue to have conversations that deepen or move the relatedness forward. So we then use all the other kinds of conversations to keep the relationship intact, repaired, enriched, etc.

The body is alert and curious, and sitting back and taking in, receptive.

The mood is one of open curiosity, interest and genuineness.

Conversations for Possibility/Outcomes/Dreaming/Design

This is the conversation we had when we are determining whether to work or live together. We are dreaming: what do you want, what matters to you, what do I want, what matters to me, can being together produce something we could not produce alone. If we join forces can we create a shared future of which we both want to be part? This is when we create outcomes and see whether partnership is possible. People do this in dating and business all the time.

The body is alert, wide, listening, relaxed and vision is in the distance.

The mood is one of ambition.

Conversations for Action

This is where people use requests, offers, promises, etc. to coordinate action. A colleague requested that I give her some information about conversations. I accepted and promise to deliver that. All of a sudden I have a promise to fulfill. If I fulfill, she and I get one future. If I break my promise, we get another. I could have declined as well or counter offered. All moves that would lead us to some kind of action observable in the world. (See *Leader's Inventory* for information about requests, offers and promises.)

The body is centered, fully present, aligned, and ready for movement, extended.

The mood is ambition and purpose.

Conversations for Evaluation/Completion/Accountability/Apology

This is where we take stock and do the work of maintaining health and workability in relating. We may evaluate progress, declare satisfaction or dissatisfaction, determine where to take responsibility for ourselves, and we repair when trust is damaged in any way. Being able to have these conversations effectively is critical to maintaining thriving, healthy, flowing, long standing relationships both in business and personally.

The body is sitting back, relaxed, unwound and present.

The mood is love/gratitude/humility.

Conversations for Intimacy

These conversations are also part of maintaining relational health, and some may assert that the above set of conversations usually produce intimacy if done skillfully. However, this conversation is specifically designed for intimacy building and usually happens more in the personal domain than professional. That said, however, there are conversations for professional intimacy and team building that can happen. This is usually when people share and the others listen and simply stay fully present, or “get you.” It is when we really sit back in our chair and receive another human being. It is where feelings can surface without losing face and people do not react, they just be.

The body is open, soft and receptive.

The mood is love/acceptance/generosity.