

Step 1 of WQSB DPR Plan asks for employees to attempt to speak with the other individual(s) involved when experiencing a dispute or a conflict.

In that context and for some people, having to voice concerns, participate in a dialogue and work on solutions can be challenging. The COGHO tool has been developed to support individuals in having these discussions with confidence.

The creation of this tool is inspired by concepts developed by Terrell (2011).

Principles

The four principles of a COGHO conversation are:

- Speak **C**ourageously
- Receive opinions and criticisms **G**racefully
- Be **H**umble
- Be **O**pen to Learn

Speak **C**ourageously

Many people avoid or ignore disputes and conflicts, usually out of fear - not feeling enough trust and safety in the relationship to speak up.

Avoidance of conflict can lead to the eradication of mutual trust and lead to more disputes and conflicts further down the road.

Speaking the truth (even when it is difficult) allows for trust to be maintained or rebuilt. Therefore, it is important that employees speak courageously. Open communication when a conflict occurs is key to a safe and healthy work environment.

Thence, you must speak whenever possible, especially in situations of conflict.

Receive opinions and criticisms **G**racefully

When receiving diverging opinions or criticisms, one must accept it **gracefully**, e.g., not firing back a reaction rooted in emotion.

If you are able to process the emotion you feel when hearing what you perceive as negative comments, that will give you a mental space and time to think about the situation, welcome the other person's perspective and allow for self-criticism.

It's also about being able to express being frustrated or angry (or other types of strong emotions) by what you are receiving without yelling, stomping one's feet or reacting with incivility.

Be **H**umble

One must deal with diverging opinions or criticisms with **humility**. In most disputes or conflicts, the individuals involved hold some form of responsibility for the mishandling or escalation. Thus, it is important to be open to look into oneself and assess in good faith what you might need to change.

This is so much more important because there is a common understanding in our society that one is not always right and that nobody can do everything perfectly. Thence, in responding to criticism, an individual is expected to make a judgment about his/her own behavior, about the mistakes he/she might have made, with the objective of improving. If this does not occur, it will make it more difficult to solve the dispute or the conflict, and will erode trust even further.

Be **O**pen to Learn

It is important to show **openness** to learn. Be curious and ask questions about what you might have said, or do, that in the perspective of the other individual contributed to the situation.

This is an essential part of a constructive communication between individuals faced with a dispute or a conflict.

Once both individuals can communicate effectively about the problems at the root of a dispute or a conflict, if they both are willing to learn about why it occurred in the first place and they are engaged in finding solutions to address them, they will not only have solved the dispute or conflict at hand, but also prevented potential related disputes or conflicts from happening in the future.