

CONFIDENCE & ASSERTIVENESS

by Key Impact

BELLY BREATHING TO FEEL CALM

Breathing through your nose and into your belly, slowly, will help you calm down in tense situations. The more you practice it, the more calm you'll feel, all the time. Remember "Low, slow and through the nose" (thanks to Dynamic Breathing).

- **Low** in your belly
- **Slow** inhale, even slower exhale, with a pause in between
- **Through the nose** to slow the flow and maintain CO2 levels in your lungs

SPEAK LOUDLY FROM THE GUT

Practice drawing your voice from your diaphragm. It's a bit strange at first, but once you get the hang of it you'll find that you can raise your voice while remaining calm and in control. Remember, *this is not shouting*. Shouting is when you push air from your chest and vibrate your vocal folds nastily. Doing it for any amount of time will damage them, and cause your voice to start to sound hoarse.

When projecting your voice, feel your stomach, back and pelvic floor muscles engage to push the air out. You can get loud and booming without ever having to shout. This voice speaks directly to people's deep reptilian brain. Once you've mastered it, be careful how often and when you use it. The powerful effects can become addictive.

BUT WHAT IF I SAY THE WRONG THING?

The wrong thing to say is nothing at all. Speak loudly, and clearly share your thoughts and ideas. Be open to feedback and you'll never say the 'wrong' thing. You'll also never go back to your desk furious with yourself for missing yet another opportunity to speak.

INFLECTION MATTERS

Downward inflections are for statements of fact, commands, and speak of confidence. Upward inflections invite critical evaluation, they ask questions and invite people to think for themselves. Over-use upward inflections and you'll seem unsure of yourself.

Record a phone conversation and listen to it. Practice speaking with downward inflections.

WHO ARE YOU?

A major cause for feeling or seeming, unsure of yourself is because you are. Most of us haven't taken the time to ask themselves "What do I stand for?". When we do, things change. Take some time, have a think, and write down three of your core values (they may be honesty, justice, or being a good friend). Pick three things that you stand for. Hopefully, you've got more than three, but lets just focus on three for now.

CORE VALUES:

1.
2.
3.

When you find yourself in a difficult situation, reluctant to speak up or tell someone what you really think, remind yourself of these values. They can often give you a drive that will push you past a temporary awkwardness.

Now, embody these values. Remind yourself of them, and demonstrate them physically, by making and holding eye-contact, opening your chest, smiling and walking tall.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Most of us have a habit of focusing on processes over outcomes. By that, we mean that often in situations, we focus on what's happening, what someone is saying or how we might feel, rather than thinking about what we want from a situation. Asking yourself "What do I want from this?" will be really useful for clarifying how you want to behave in the moment.

Always ask yourself: "What do I want from this?"

Whenever you're feeling stressed, tense, angry or overwhelmed, imagine yourself casting a fishing line.

Throw your thoughts forward, into the future. From there, you can look back on this discussion, and imagine how you'd like to remember it. Then, think about the fish. What is it you want, from here, in this moment. Draw that to you. Reel it in. Focus on doing something you'll be proud of having done.



If you're having an argument, bringing up someone's flaws and past indiscretions probably won't get you what you want, and that's not the kind of thing you'll remember doing and feel proud of having done. In difficult moments, take a breath to your belly, embody your core values, cast your mind forward, and ask yourself "What do I want from this, and how am I going to get it?"

Action, Impact, Desired Outcome

This is a very effective method for giving someone developmental feedback (some might call this 'criticism'). The idea is to strip out judgemental and emotionally-laden words that get people in a cranky mood, like 'lazy' and 'disruptive'; and instead present the feedback cleanly, in a way they're likely to hear *and act upon*.

This model is also particularly useful for more personal, behavioural feedback - relating to someone's attitude or actions around the workplace. The advantage of this approach is that it's largely unemotional, and leading towards outcomes. This makes these discussions a lot easier than they might ordinarily be.

Describe the action

Describe what the person did or said in *exact* terms. List examples (without pressing the point, stating only as many as needed to get their agreement). Try not to generalise or exaggerate (i.e. don't say 'always' or they'll only need to find one example of a time when they didn't, and you're proven wrong).

The goal is to state the issue in terms with which the other person must agree.

Example: "Last week when I wrote that document and put it on the intranet, you logged in and changed it without telling me."

Describe the impact

Example: "When that happens, I feel as if my work doesn't matter."

Describe what happens as a result of the impact, on yourself, or on them, upon work or the team or the whole company. This is where you can use emotional terms, provided you're talking about *your own emotions*. This way, the things you say will be impossible to disagree with (because they're your emotions). "You are disrespecting me" is something that they can refute, whereas with "I felt disrespected", they can't.

The goal is to state the impact in terms with which they cannot disagree.

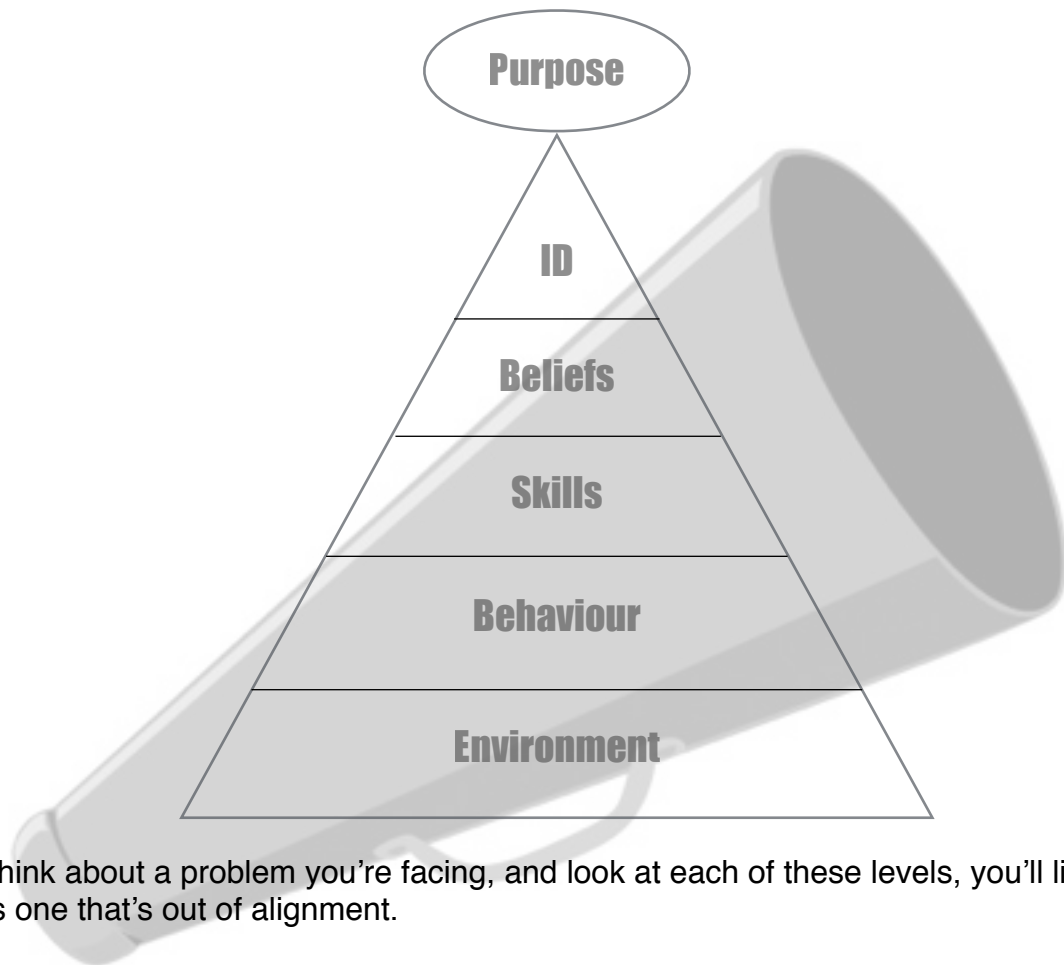
Talk about the desired outcome

Examples: "I'd prefer it if you discussed changes with me before they go live."

Here, you talk about what you would like to have happen - how you'd like to be treated, what you'd like someone to do. Your focus should be on the future, on happy outcomes and fulfilment *for both of you*. You can (and perhaps *should*) workshop the result, and talk with the person in search of a solution that will work for you both.

The Logical Levels

This idea is particularly effective for dealing with an issue which a person, themselves sees as an issue, but doesn't yet feel capable (or willing) to fix it. You can also use it on yourself. This may be familiar to anyone who's glanced at psychology or anthropology, it's been borrowed and repurposed from Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



If you think about a problem you're facing, and look at each of these levels, you'll likely find there is one that's out of alignment.

People who struggle with their weight might have an Environment that includes loads of access to fatty or sugary food, and include other people who also over-eat. Their Behaviour may not include going to the gym or getting much exercise. They may lack the Skill of cooking healthy food, or of maintaining discipline. Most interestingly, they may just not Believe themselves to be capable of losing weight (many talk about thyroid conditions, which, 90% of the time is effect rather than cause). They may, at an Identity level, just see themselves as someone who is heavy, and have resigned themselves to that. The overweight person probably won't see their life's purpose as in line with them being fat.

Usually, these levels won't *all* be out of alignment. It'll often be one little tweak (a belief, perhaps) that needs to change for behaviour to start to shift.

While this model doesn't 'fix' problems (no model ever does, with any reliability), but it can help you locate their source, in your own behaviour and in others. Generally, we find problems lower down, and the drive for solutions often comes from higher up.