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Your conversation
is the relationship.

How to create agreement in conflict!

Have you ever just wanted to have your point heard or just be understood?

In today's fast-paced world filled with stress, overwhelm and maxed out schedules, miscommunication has become an all too common experience and our relationships suffer. Our conversations come in all forms today: face-to-face, phone, email, and text messaging. Whether you are with a client, customer or colleague, it has never been more important to navigate your conversations effectively. The bottom line: Your conversation *is* the relationship.

When we are experiencing connection (trust and rapport) in conversation, the natural flow of information back and forth is easy and comfortable. From an early age, we are trained to use certain words when delivering unpleasant news or arguing our point of view. These words are called "Offset Words," and they break trust and rapport. The two most common Offset Words are *but* and *however*. These words negate and discount what was previously said or written, and they usually bring bad news. We are conditioned to expect bad or opposing news after "but." Do you ever remember someone giving you a compliment, like "*Your hair looks nice, but it is really short now.*" Did you really believe the compliment?

To alter the offset condition and have your point heard just add the word "*and.*" This allows your statement and the other person's statement to stand on their own. The use of "*and*" provides seamless communication linking two components of the conversation together. The result is your view flows right into the other person's thought, idea, view, or feeling. It allows a discussion to take place rather than an argument. Using "*and*" gives the listener the opportunity to receive the information that would otherwise be received with resistance or not heard at all. You create an opening for the receiver to have choice in how he or she will respond to the matter at hand.

Creating Agreement in Conflict

As the topic of a conversation becomes controversial, we disagree or become emotional — our physiology changes and so does our language. Can you remember a time when you were arguing your point on a topic or just had a difference of opinion? What happened to your internal state? What was the inflection and tonality of your words? What words did you use to get your point across? What happened to your internal state: Did your heart start beating faster? Did the blood drain from your face? Did you break out in a sweat?

For the most part, we are not truly listening to the other person, we are waiting to speak. We are preparing our remarks in our mind and we listen less. When we finally speak, we start using words that highlight our opposing position. The most common words are, you guessed it, Offset Words such as “*but*” and “*however.*”

The Agreement Frame

There is a solution! When emotions run high, and we choose to neutralize conflict, we use the “agreement frame” to break through the conflict. It assists in neutralizing an opposing position and provides a space for calm and clear communication. This is how it works. First use the phrase, “*I appreciate your thoughts.*” Next, use “*and*” to insert your opinion, thought, or view. Continue to use the agreement frame until the conversation calms and your point is received. It usually takes a few repetitions. Stick with it, the results are amazing.

<i>Neutralize</i>	<i>Calm</i>	<i>Control</i>
I appreciate your	Views	and...
I respect your	Sayings	
(I agree that for you, your)	Feelings	
	Thoughts	

STEP 1: Neutralize the situation by creating agreement with the other person. Choose one of these phrases: *I appreciate, I respect, or I agree.* This step stops the emotions from growing more intense. (Remember you are not agreeing with the content.)

STEP 2: Calm the situation with a choice of words that fit the conversation. For example, you can choose from phrases like: *I appreciate your...* (thought, view, feeling, or what you think). Here is an example: “I appreciate your opinion and here is another option.”

STEP 3: Repeat the phrase until you feel the conversation calming and your point of view is heard. It may take two or three times. Be patient, it always works. If the person you are speaking with raises or lowers their tone, match their tone as you feel appropriate.

The agreement frame is one of the most powerful language techniques you can use. Our lives are filled with stress and at times, people will “fly off the handle.” Use the agreement frame and watch how your position is heard and conflict is neutralized!

Performance and communication coach Steven Griffith is the founder of the Coaching Intelligence® Institute and has been coaching individuals and organizations for the past 20 years. Steven has successfully implemented his Coaching Intelligence program with experts in a variety of fields: CEO’s, professional coaches, sales people, client services personnel, health and fitness professionals, and hundreds of others in how to maximize their performance, effectively communicate, sell, negotiate, motivate, and get results through better conversations.