

33 Difficult conversations remotely

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SPEAKERS

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So many of us are currently still working from home. COVID is still there, the crisis is still there. And so we have to work from home. But last week, I had one of the participants of my course she asked me, okay, so now we're used to working from home and we apply a lot of the concepts that you teach us. But I have a team member that I have to have a difficult conversation with. And in the past, I would then go to that person and just say, let's have a chat, let's have a coffee together, or go for a walk or eats, grab a bite together. And that would make it easier to have this difficult conversation. But now that we are working hundred percent remotely, how do I do this? How can I have a difficult conversation with a good outcome when working hundred percent remotely? And that's what this podcast episode is all about. Because I am sure that you have also difficult conversations that you should have, maybe a stupid decision was imposed on you, and you would like to discuss this with your boss, or with a headquarters. Or maybe you need to give some negative feedback to a colleague. Or maybe there is a conflict and you would like to handle this conflict with that person. So how are you going to do this when you can only do it remotely. I'm Murielle. CEO mom and educator, I used to work really hard and sacrifice the important things to me until I lost my motivation. Fast forwards past many failed attempts and lessons learned. And I found a way to reach great results while working less. Today, I'm obsessed with helping other leaders build meaningful lives. So each week, I'll be sharing inspiration to change your life and organisation. This is rebel leader with a hearts. Now there isn't that much difference between having a difficult conversation life, or remotely. There are some tips and some strategies that I will share with you. And of course, there are a little bit extra strategies when you have to do this remotely. But the most important thing is that you will have to prepare that conversation very well. And you will have to communicate even better than when you can do with life. Because when you're doing it life, you can improvise, you can use much more of your senses, you can feel things, you can touch a person if that person is okay with it, of course you can see more things. And these are things that you will miss online online, you won't have all your senses. So that will make it difficult. And that's why the first thing that is critical is to prepare that conversation. And when I say prepare, we immediately think of course taking a paper and a pen and starting to note what we're going to say. And of course, you will need to prepare it that way as well. But I want you also to prepare yourself emotionally, and somatically. Because if you are very angry, if you're very stressed, if you have low energy, you probably won't be in the best emotional disposition to have this conversation and to have the outcome that you want from that conversation. So you will have to prepare yourself emotionally as well to have this

conversation. And when I say emotionally, I also mean somatically. So even with your body, if your body is really tense, if your body is really tired, you won't get a great conversation. So also prepare your body and pay attention when you're having the conversation to your body disposition in the call that you will have with that person, even if it's not a video call, still pay attention to your body language because like no for instance, I'm smiling and I'm sure that you hear me smiling in your voice in my voice. Or, like no, I'm really having a small tone of voice and I'm all bent over myself and you probably can hear that in my voice as well. So prepare yourself mentally and prepare yourself also emotionally and somatically. That's the first step. The second step I want you to do is to pick a great time and place for that conversation. And of course, when your life, you could say, let's go to a restaurant or let's go for a walk or for coffee. But when you are online, you cannot do that. But you can still pick a great time and place. And what I mean by that if the both of you are surrounded by people by screaming children, or you're working from a space where everyone can hear you, you won't be in the best conditions to have that conversation. So you should ask, or you should prepare yourself a great timing and place. But you should also ask the other person to be in a calm environment where nobody else can hear that person so that you can have the best possible condition. then, thirdly, what I suggest, if you have a difficult conversation is to use video, because with video, you will at least also see the other person because, as you know, when we communicate, of course, there are the words that are important. But we all know that the tone of voice and even the body disposition is even more important than the words, I can say one thing, but because my emotion, tone of voice and body is not aligned with what I say it doesn't come over as authentic or as truthful. And when you see the body disposition of the other person, and you can see the emotions on the face. You can also interpret and see if the conversation is heading towards the direction that you would like it to be or not. And then of course, pivot and change the words or listen more, or whatever you need to do to get the results you want. So it's much better to have this conversation through a video conference where you can see each other Of course, if it's possible. Now, the next point is you will have to listen empathetically. And why is that so important? First of all, often when we don't agree on something, or when we have a conflict, or when the relationship is not great. Often it's because we have assumptions, or we have different interpretations. And as you know, everything we do is based on interpretations and not based on facts. And that's why it is so important to listen and to leave your assumptions behind you. Because maybe you think that person said this to you, for whatever reason. But maybe this has nothing to do with you. You don't have to take this personally. Maybe when you listen to that person and really listen with empathy, you will understand why that person said this or made that decision, and it will help you in your conversation. So leave your assumptions behind you. And then look for the interpretations. Because another thing that happens often is people can react impulsively and with bad words, because they are under a lot of stress under pressure or exhausted. And if you react to that behaviour, instead of listening empathetically to try and understand their needs behind that behaviour, it will make the conversation more difficult. So listen empathetically and try to understand also what is the need of the other person. And usually when you listen empathetically what we see is that that person that might have been stressed and exhausted, will change its mood, the mood will evolve towards maybe peacefulness or more enthusiasm, because being listened to is sometimes just what we need to feel better, and then to behave better. So listen, empathetically and do that from your heart. Don't just listen to counter the arguments of the other person. Simply Listen, for the sake of listening. And what's also very helpful is to rephrase what that person said. Just to show that you understood we phrase what what the other person said, and ask open questions without giving any advice. That's how you listen empathetically so you listen from your heart,

you ask open questions, you don't give advice you we free so that you show that you understand, and all that to really understand the other person, instead of focusing on your own assumptions or your own interpretations of what happens. Now, you can start by listening emphatically, or you can choose by starting with your feedback what you have to say. And when you do that, please pay attention to talking about what the person did, and not talk about the person as such. So instead of saying, You are a failure, or you are not great, as a colleague, you are aggressive, or you are lazy, this is really hurtful, it's better to say, the report you delivered wasn't great enough, or the email you sent was hurtful, or the, the words that you used in the meeting, were not the best possible words. So it's better to focus on what the person does, then to focus on the person. As such, it's way more efficient and less hurtful for the person, what I also always find really useful is to share how I feel. So I might say, you know, when you sent me this email, or when you said this, this is how I felt, I really felt bad, I felt like a loser. And I didn't feel respected. And I know, that's probably not what your intention was, but this is how I received it. And when you share what you feel, people can probably will probably not argue about what you're feeling, because what you are feeling is yours. And you are not responsible for someone else's feeling you are responsible for what you say and what you do. But you are not responsible for what the other person is feeling, just as the other person is not responsible for what you are feeling. And so I find that when you share what you feel because of the situation, it helps. And then after this difficult conversation, you can of course, agree on next steps. But a next step can simply be you have this conversation, you have listened to that person, and particularly with all your heart. And instead of trying to fix it in that moment, your next step could be if you feel that the other person still needs some time, could be you know what, let's just give it some time. And let's connect with each other next week or tomorrow, again, to talk about this another time. So don't always force an outcome or a solution, because maybe it's not the right moment, and maybe that person still needs a little bit more time. And even when people get defensive, you know, sometimes you get feedback, and you become very defensive of that feedback that you received in the moment of that conversation. But then the conversation ends, and you're at home or at night, and you think about it another time. And then you think Yeah, you know what, I think he's right. He's right, what he said is, is definitely impacting my behaviour and I should do something about that. So sometimes, even when people defend themselves later on, the message needs a little bit of time to, to land or to settle itself and then the person comes back, maybe they will say something about it, or maybe they will simply change their behaviours, because they have taken into account what you said. Okay, so what are the steps to have a difficult conversation remotely? First, it's really, really important that you prepare yourself mentally you prepare the conversation, but also emotionally and somatically. Secondly, pick a great time and place for both of you to have this conversation. Of course, it as you are working remotely, it will be each a different place for this conversation. Use videos so that you can have at least an extra sense than just having a phone call. Listen, empathically talk about the actions of the person and not about the person then also share what you feel and ends by agreeing on a next step. And the next step doesn't have to be immediately solving the issue can just be Let's meet each other tomorrow or next week to talk about it. And to see how we can handle this in the future. You can also check Episode Number eight, where I talk about a methodology on how to counter a bad decision and this will also help you in preparing for this conversation. Also, we have prepared a bundle on how to bring informal conversations and fun within remote teams. If you want to receive that bundle. Just go to the show notes of this episode on rebelleaderwithaheart.com/33. And you will be able to download that bundle because the more fun and informal moments that you can add within your team the less difficult conversations you will have to

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