

The “What Happened?” Conversation Challenge: The situation is more complex than either person can see.	A Battle of Messages	A Learning Conversation
	Assumption: I know all I need to know to understand what happened. Goal: Persuade them I'm right.	Assumption: Each of us is bringing different information and perceptions to the table; there are likely to be important things that each of us doesn't know. Goal: Explore each other's stories: how we understand the situation and why.
	Assumption: I know what they intended. Goal: Let them know what they did was wrong.	Assumption: I know what I intended, and the impact their actions had on me. I don't and can't know what's in their head. Goal: Share the impact on me, and find out what they were thinking. Also find out what impact I'm having on them.
	Assumption: It's all their fault. (Or it's all my fault.) Goal: Get them to admit blame and take responsibility for making amends.	Assumption: We have probably <i>both</i> contributed to this mess. Goal: Understand the contribution system: how our actions interact to produce this result.

	A Battle of Messages	A Learning Conversation
The Feelings Conversation Challenge: The situation is emotionally charged.	Assumption: Feelings are irrelevant and wouldn't be helpful to share. (Or, my feelings are their fault and they need to hear about them.) Goal: Avoid talking about feelings. (Or, let 'em have it!)	Assumption: Feelings are the heart of the situation. Feelings are usually complex. I may have to dig a bit to understand my feelings. Goal: Address feelings (mine and theirs) without judgments or attributions. Acknowledge feelings before problem-solving.
The Identity Conversation Challenge: The situation threatens our identity.	Assumption: I'm competent or incompetent, good or bad, lovable or unlovable. There is no in-between. Goal: Protect my all-or-nothing self-image.	Assumption: There may be a lot at stake psychologically for both of us. Each of us is complex, neither of us is perfect. Goal: Understand the identity issues on the line for each of us. Build a more complex self-image to maintain my balance better.