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On Conversation

a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

When you think about it, our lives are composed of a rich tapestry of conversations. There are silent spaces between them, but everything else is made up of conversations. What an intriguing revelation! While it's hard to believe, I never considered my own life in this way until recently. Looking back over decades, I know I have engaged in many conversations effectively, but I also admit that I didn't deal well with many others. The same probably can be said for all of us walking the planet.

Conversations take place for lots of reasons. They take many different forms, and are rooted in a variety of emotions. Some bring joy to ourselves and other people, some bring sadness, discomfort, or disappointment. There are conversations that provide information. There are conversations that focus on asking questions. Some are confrontational. Some are benignly agreeable. How many of each type did you engage in TODAY? What was your level of satisfaction with them? Have you ever seriously taken stock?

Whatever conversation you have next, know that you can handle it. With a few skills, some civility, and a great deal of art, you can build the confidence to deal with any type of conversation. Check out my feature article below for a list of conversations you may have and useful points to consider under each. Considering these points BEFORE you get into these conversations can make the difference between success and failure, satisfaction and frustration, gain and loss. Take a look.

Sylvia

FEATURE ARTICLE

ACHIEVE SUCCESS ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

The following list represents the types of conversations most of us engage in on a regular basis. The problem lies in the reality that we tend to handle some of these better than others. By considering and implementing the points under each, YOU can enjoy less stress, get more of what you want, alienate fewer people, and, in general, increase your quality of life.

Expressing an opinion

- Speak succinctly and directly, using "I" statements.
- Avoid talking in meaningless circles.
- Invite the other person to share his/her opinion.

Seeking information

- Ask for what you need or want directly rather than passively.
- If appropriate, explain why you need or want that particular information.
- Be specific in your request so that you get exactly what you are looking for from the other person.

Giving an assignment

- Be clear.
- Be specific.
- Summarize and then encourage the other person to ask questions.

Announcing change

- Set the stage for what you need to announce.
- Consider others' feelings about the news.
- Deliver the message clearly, simply, directly, avoiding unnecessary information.

Posing a creative idea

- Be sure you have thought through the idea before speaking.
- Lay out the idea in a way that others can understand and follow it.
- Demonstrate the value of your idea to the other person, department, or company at large.

Requesting help

- Begin your request by directly saying: "I need your help with X, Y, or Z." Avoid demands.
- Explain why you need that help and the time frame in which you must receive it.
- Consider the other person's feelings, time constraints, skill set, and willingness to help you in this particular way.

Criticizing someone's behavior, decisions, actions, or work

- Plan carefully what you intend to say in advance. Don't make it an attack.
- Consider how the other person will hear what you communicate.
- Be direct and to the point but also respectful and gentle. Remember that your goal is to see positive change in the future.

Revealing personal information

- Know why you are choosing to reveal this information to this particular individual. Be crystal clear about it in your mind.
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes. How will he/she receive the information? Will it be a burden?
- What is your ultimate goal as a result of making this revelation? What do you want to achieve?

Planning an event, project, or process

- Lay out your ideas in an orderly fashion.
- Explain your reasons for wanting to see the event, project, or process move forward in a certain way.
- Ask for other people's ideas and thoughts too. Create a functional dialogue.

Confronting someone on the spot

- Take a deep breath before taking the plunge.
- Control your emotions in a reasonable manner.
- Clearly state the problem, its impact, and what needs to be different.

RESOURCES

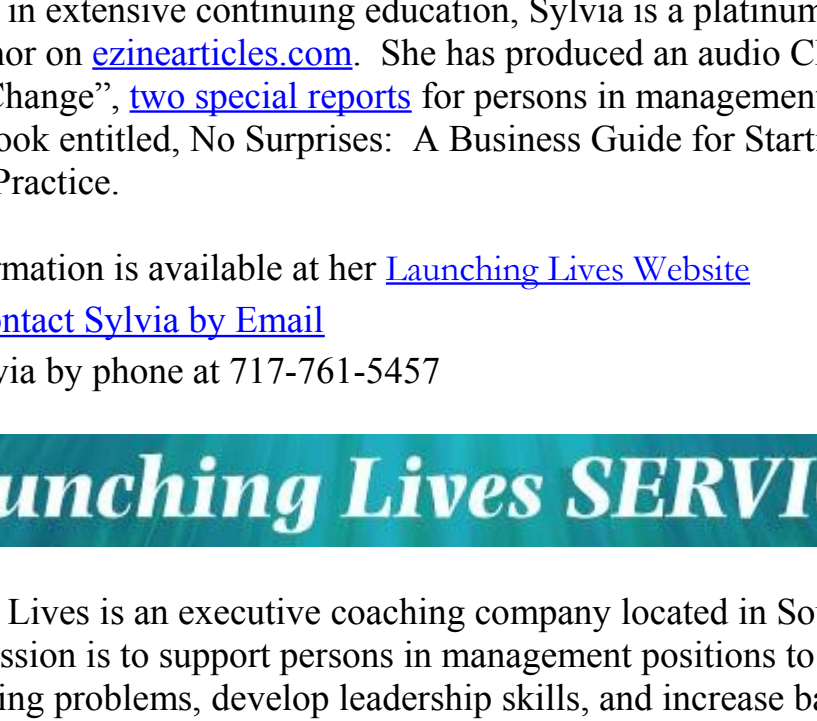
If you honestly desire to make all of your conversations authentic, enrich your relationships in the process, improve understanding, and deal with strong emotions both in yourself and in others, the national bestseller, *Fierce Conversations*, by Susan Scott, is for you. In the Foreword, the point is well made that "our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time". Nothing is more true when you think about it. One of the great aspects of this book is that Scott peppers her chapters with examples of various difficult conversations and provides lots of strategies and tips for handling them. Available in paperback on Amazon.com, you can order your copy of this 2002 gem now.

TIP

Select one type of conversation you know you need to improve. First, identify the root cause behind your dissatisfaction with this particular conversation. Next, get in touch with how people respond to you during this conversation. Finally, commit to making one change in your approach, style, content, choice of words, facial expression, or attitude. Practice that shift over and over again for six weeks. Re-evaluate your feelings and results related to these conversations at the end of that time period.

Where in the World is SYLVIA?

Like everyone, Sylvia has been affected by the severe winter, but still has been getting around and keeping to her schedule. Here she is celebrating her birthday at a lunch in Exton, PA with her husband, Kevin.



And a heads up. Sylvia's next webinar series, entitled *Taking Charge of Your Career: The 3 "Moves"*, begins March 2. Check the [Launching Lives website](#) for details after February 15.

About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales. A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on [ezinearticles.com](#). She has produced an audio CD entitled, "Making Change", [two special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, *No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice*.

More information is available at her [Launching Lives Website](#)

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives is an executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support persons in management positions to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual, private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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