



## **Relationships That Work** ®

Daniel Ellenberg, Ph.D. | 19 Winged Foot Drive | Novato | California | 94949

Phone: (415) 883-5600 | Fax: (415) 883-5544 | [daniel@relationshipsthatwork.com](mailto:daniel@relationshipsthatwork.com)

Adapted from *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matter Most*

---

# Open and Thriving Conversations

## **Open stance and open purpose go hand in hand**

- You and the other person/s see the world differently. As challenging as this is to understand, you do not have a stranglehold on the veritable truth. It would serve you and the other to shift your orientation from certainty to curiosity, from debate to exploration, from simplicity to complexity and for either/or to a larger story.
  - Practice the power of involving yourself in a conversation that leads toward understanding and mutual respect.

## **Getting started in a conversation: Begin from the larger story**

- Do not start the conversation from your own story. In all likelihood, the other will get triggered and then you are traveling on the wrong train.
  - When their self-concept issues get triggered, they will likely react by defending themselves or counterattacking.

## **Be open to being on the same team to find a solution to the conflict**

- When you are working together, the creativity can flow and what once seemed like an irresolvable situation, can be handled surprisingly well.

## **Hearing other people's stories is a way out of being defensive and into being open**

- The more we realize that people unavoidably create stories, and that our primary task is to understand them rather than to defend ourselves, the more we are able to be free.

## **You must take the risk to allow yourself to be known**

- If people do not experience your humanness, they will not treat you as humanly as possible. To be known, you must reveal your vulnerabilities. Ultimately, it is the only show in town.
  - However, beware of should-ing on yourself if you are not sharing who you are. The quest for openness finds no support in self-abuse for not expressing yourself. Treat yourself like a shy child who needs encouragement to open up, not criticism for not opening up.