



Communication Strategies for Managers

Pathstream Webinar Series

Introduction



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Pathstream is here to provide **continuing education**, **professional development**, and **tailored career guidance**.

Believes in the potential of each employee and wants career success to be **accessible**, **transparent**, and **supported**.

Provides support for employees to **strengthen their skills** and **build successful careers**.



A few notes before we get started:

-  This presentation will last about 45 minutes.
-  If you have questions please post them to the chat. I'll answer them live as often as possible and cover the rest during Q&A at the end of the presentation.
-  The meeting is being recorded. The recording, slides, and a resource sheet will be sent to participants after the session.

Today's Goals



1

Review reasons why
communication can
be challenging

2

Share strategies for
navigating difficult
conversations

3

Reflect and discuss

Difficult conversations happen when...



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- Stakes are high





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- Perspectives differ

Example: You have a coworker who tells jokes you find offensive at work. When you try to have a conversation about it, your coworker doesn't understand your point of view. They are just trying to make people laugh, but you feel insulted.



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Example: You have a coworker who tells jokes you find offensive at work. When you try to have a conversation about it, your coworker doesn't understand your point of view. They are just trying to make people laugh, but you feel insulted.

- Feelings are involved

Example: There are budget cuts at your company making it necessary for you to let a team member go. A serious argument occurs because they feel it is unfair and they blame you for their hurt feelings.

Tools for difficult conversations



Create a positive,
solution-oriented
culture by fostering
psychological safety.

Tools for difficult conversations



Create a positive, solution-oriented culture by fostering **psychological safety**.

Create space for effective conversations, even during conflict, using **The Net**.

Tools for difficult conversations



Create a positive, solution-oriented culture by fostering **psychological safety**.

Create space for effective conversations, even during conflict, using **The Net**.

Give meaningful feedback using the **AIM framework**.

Tool #1: Psychological Safety



What is **psychological safety** and why does it matter?



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Psychological safety is the belief that one is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, like sharing ideas, asking for help, and owning mistakes.



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What is **psychological safety** and why does it matter?

Psychological safety is the belief that one is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, like sharing ideas, asking for help, and owning mistakes.

According to research from Harvard Business School,
psychological safety directly supports:

- Retention
- Compliance with policies and processes
- Problem-solving (both in terms of pace and quality of decisions)
- Company reputation



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

So how can leaders foster psychological safety for their employees?



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1. Own mistakes and ask for feedback



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

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“Last time I led the budgeting meeting I didn’t prepare as well as I could have. I’d like to open the floor for any specific feedback I could incorporate next time.”



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

So how can leaders foster psychological safety for their employees?

1. Own mistakes and ask for feedback
2. Express empathy and offer support



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

So how can leaders foster psychological safety for their employees?

1. Own mistakes and ask for feedback
2. Express empathy and offer support

“I know this has been a lot of work, and I’ve felt stressed about it, too. Is there anything I could do that would help relieve stress for you?”



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

So how can leaders foster psychological safety for their employees?

1. Own mistakes and ask for feedback
2. Express empathy and offer support
3. Address issues when they're small



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"I could have misread the tone of your message, but it sounded like you might be feeling upset about the recent decision. Would you like to talk more about it?"



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

So how can leaders foster psychological safety for their employees?

1. Own mistakes and ask for feedback
2. Express empathy and offer support
3. Address issues when they're small
4. Help build positive relationships between teammates



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4. Help build positive relationships between teammates

Encourage open, clear communication

Nurture collaboration and facilitate repair

Make time for bonding as people, not only as colleagues → A little can go a long way



Tool #1: Psychological Safety

Make time for bonding as people, not only as colleagues

When people mention something about their lives outside of work

(like a family member, a hobby, etc.) try to remember and ask about it later.

If you learn that colleagues have something in common

(like a favorite sports team, an alma mater), make the connection for them.

Start meetings with an “icebreaker” question which can build connections,

offer moments of humor, and be a quick reminder that we’re all have lives outside of work, too.

Tool #2: The Net



THE NET

Tool #2: The Net



Me:

- ✓ My interpretation
- ✓ My feelings
- ✓ What I've noticed
- ✓ My assumptions
- ✓ My needs

These are known to me.

A vertical net structure, resembling a fishing net, is positioned in the center of the slide. It is composed of a grid of white lines on a dark blue background. A white, rounded rectangular label with the text "THE NET" is centered horizontally across the middle of the net.

THE NET

Tool #2: The Net



Me:

- ✓ My interpretation
- ✓ My feelings
- ✓ What I've noticed
- ✓ My assumptions
- ✓ My needs

These are known to me.

THE NET

The other person:

- ✗ Their interpretation
- ✗ Their feelings
- ✗ What they've noticed
- ✗ Their assumptions
- ✗ Their needs

These are **NOT** known to me.

Tool #2: The Net



Goals of using The Net:

- Stay as close to your “side” as possible



THE NET

AKA:

- Speak only about what you’ve observed, done, thought, and felt

Tool #2: The Net



Goals of using The Net:

- Stay as close to your “side” as possible
- Don’t “cross” the net



THE NET

AKA:

- Speak only about what you’ve observed, done, thought, and felt
- Don’t claim to know the other person’s observations, actions, thoughts, or feelings

Tool #2: The Net



Me (Supervisor)

- I didn't adequately train my direct reports on the new system
- Our productivity metrics are dropping and I'm concerned there might be consequences for me and my team
- I want my direct reports to feel supported and competent

These are known only to me.



THE NET

Tool #2: The Net



Me (Supervisor)

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THE NET

The other person (my direct report)

- I know I'm not hitting the productivity metrics
- I want to do a good job
- I'm worried that my boss is annoyed that I ask so many questions
- I'm going to get fired.

These are NOT known to me.

Tool #2: The Net



Staying on my side of
the net could sound like:

"I noticed that your productivity metric is falling. I'm concerned because this could lead to bigger issues if we don't discuss it. From your perspective, what might be leading to a drop in productivity?"



Tool #2: The Net



Staying on my side of the net could sound like:

"I noticed that your productivity metric is falling. I'm concerned because this could lead to bigger issues if we don't discuss it. From your perspective, what might be leading to a drop in productivity?"



Crossing the net could sound like:

"Your productivity metric is falling. You're just not working hard enough and unfortunately it's starting to show."

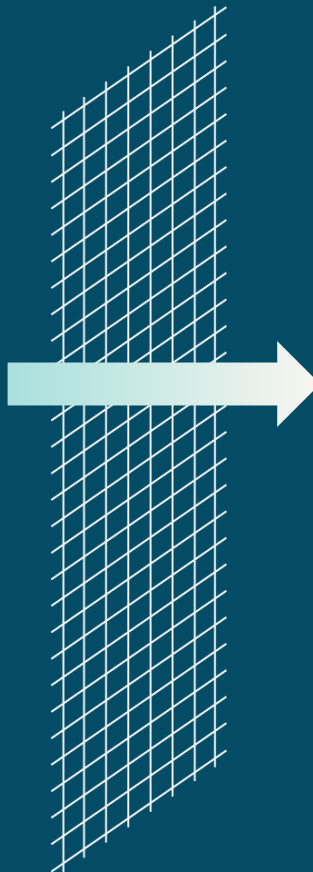
These are **NOT** known to me.

Tool #2: The Net



Me

- ✓ I see/observed/noticed...
and I interpreted that to mean ...
- ✓ When you did..., I felt...
- ✓ I am concerned because *[situation]*.
Is this also concerning to you?
- ✓ I was expecting to see...,
but I did not see it. For example...
What's your perspective?



"You don't seem to care."

"You got mad and then..."

"You think this is good work."

"You're being careless."

Tool #3: The AIM Framework



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stands for:

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Action:

Describe the
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Describe the specific action or behavior that needs to change (or that's going well, if delivering positive feedback)

Impact:

Explain the impact that person's behavior or action is having on them, their team, you, and/or the company as a whole.

Tool #3: The AIM Framework



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stands for:

Action:

Describe the specific action or behavior that needs to change (or that's going well, if delivering positive feedback)

Impact:

Explain the impact that person's behavior or action is having on them, their team, you, and/or the company as a whole.

Move forward:

Together, decide what should happen next to resolve the feedback and move forward.

Tool #3: The AIM Framework



Scenario:

This month, a person you supervise hasn't met their productivity metrics. They also tend to be disengaged during team meetings and don't always respond to messages in a timely way. Others on the team have to pick up the slack, and as their manager, their poor performance is a reflection on you, too.

A (Action): Underperforming on productivity metrics, bringing low morale to team meetings, not engaged enough via message

I (Impact): Negatively affects team's overall productivity metrics and morale, as well as your performance as their supervisor

M (Move forward): ?

Tool #3: The AIM Framework



The most effective **Moving Forward** steps will:

- Come authentically from the conversation
- Address the root cause of the issue (if possible)
- Be achievable (even if incremental and “small”)

In order to get there, the person giving the feedback will need to:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Leave space for dialogue and empathy
- Get specific about the next step(s)



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A (Action): Underperforming on productivity metrics, bringing low morale to team meetings, not engaged enough via message

I (Impact): Negatively affects team's overall productivity metrics and morale, as well as your performance as their supervisor

M (Move forward): You're going to put in a request to get them a technology update, and you'll check-in a week after the change to see how it's going.

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Q&A