

MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

NATIONAL ATHLETIC DIRECTORS CONFERENCE

NATIONAL HARBOR, MARYLAND

DECEMBER 15, 2019

IDENTIFICATION

- What types of conversations are these in the world of Athletic Administration?
- Who are the players?
- What role(s) do you as AD play?

PARENTS



1. Playing Time
2. Concerns about Coach(es)
3. Safety Concerns
4. General Concerns

COACHES

1. Program Evaluation
2. Salary, etc.
3. Budget/Facilities/Needs
4. Concerns from Administrative Standpoint
 1. Termination



STUDENT-ATHLETES



1. Policy violations
2. Academic eligibility
3. Playing time
4. Concerns about coach(es)
 - (Litigious vs. otherwise)

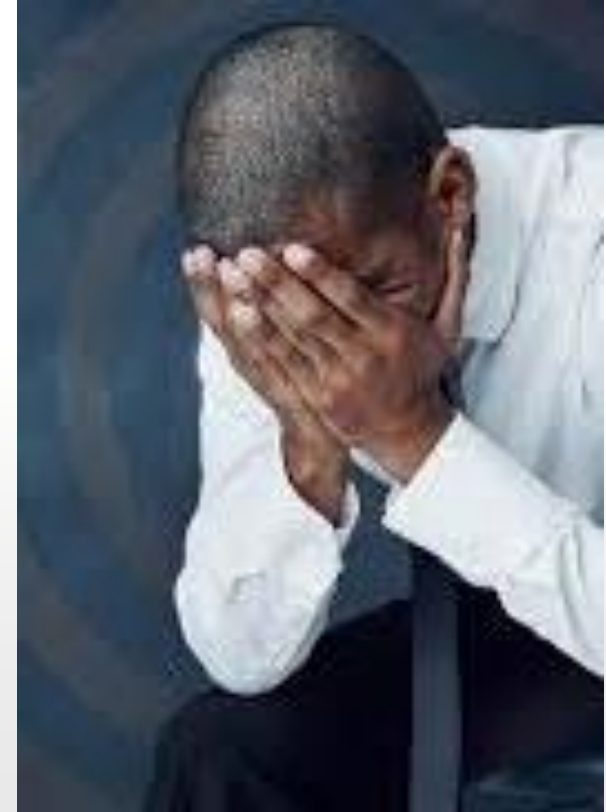
OTHERS



1. A fan wanting to discuss a negative experience at an event
2. An AD from a rival school regarding an incident at a recent contest
3. A non-parent (but other relative) regarding eligibility
4. Boosters – expectations and degree of involvement

FIRST – WHAT *NOT* TO DO

Avoid one (or all!) of these 4 mistakes



MISTAKE #1: ASSUME THE WORST

- Making assumptions about the other person's ...
 - Character
 - Intentions
 - Reaction



MISTAKE #2:

DOMINATE THE CONVERSATION

- Showing lack of empathy
- Not being an active listener



MISTAKE #3:

SEND OUT NEGATIVE VIBES

- Not being an active listener (See Mistake #2)
 - Talk over other party
 - Cut them off or argue
 - Check your phone, etc.
- Body posture
 - Arms crossed
 - Facial expressions



MISTAKE #4:

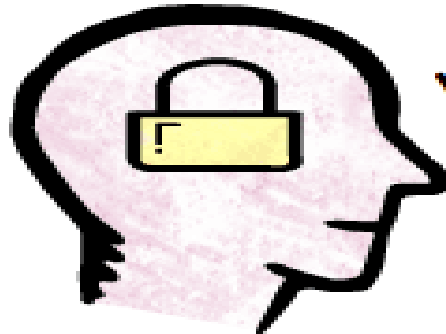
HAVE A PREDETERMINED OUTCOME

- Entering the conversation with a closed mind
- Other party will discern that you are only meeting as a courtesy or as a “necessary evil”
- Over time, this becomes your reputation



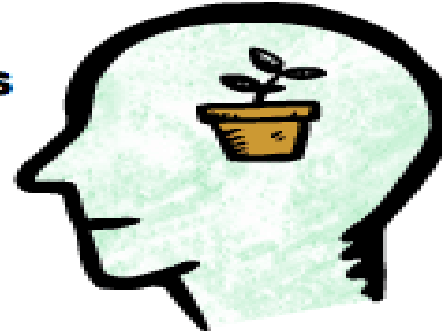
IT'S ALL IN THE APPROACH

Fixed mindset



versus

Growth mindset



Goal: to look smart
Avoid failure
Avoid challenges
Failure defines your identity
Feedback and criticism is personal

Goal: to learn
Confront uncertainty
Embrace challenges
Failure provides information
Feedback is about current capabilities

TIP #1 – PLAN AHEAD



- Don't allow the meeting to happen on the spur of the moment, when possible.
- Research, research, research!
- Know where/how much you are willing to compromise
- Choose the right setting
- Who is expected/allowed in the meeting?

TIP #2 – BE CLEAR AND CONCISE

- Set meeting parameters
 - What you are (and are not) willing to discuss
- Make sure to be clear on key points
- Repeat the other person's points back to them (active listening)
- Close the meeting in an appropriate time frame

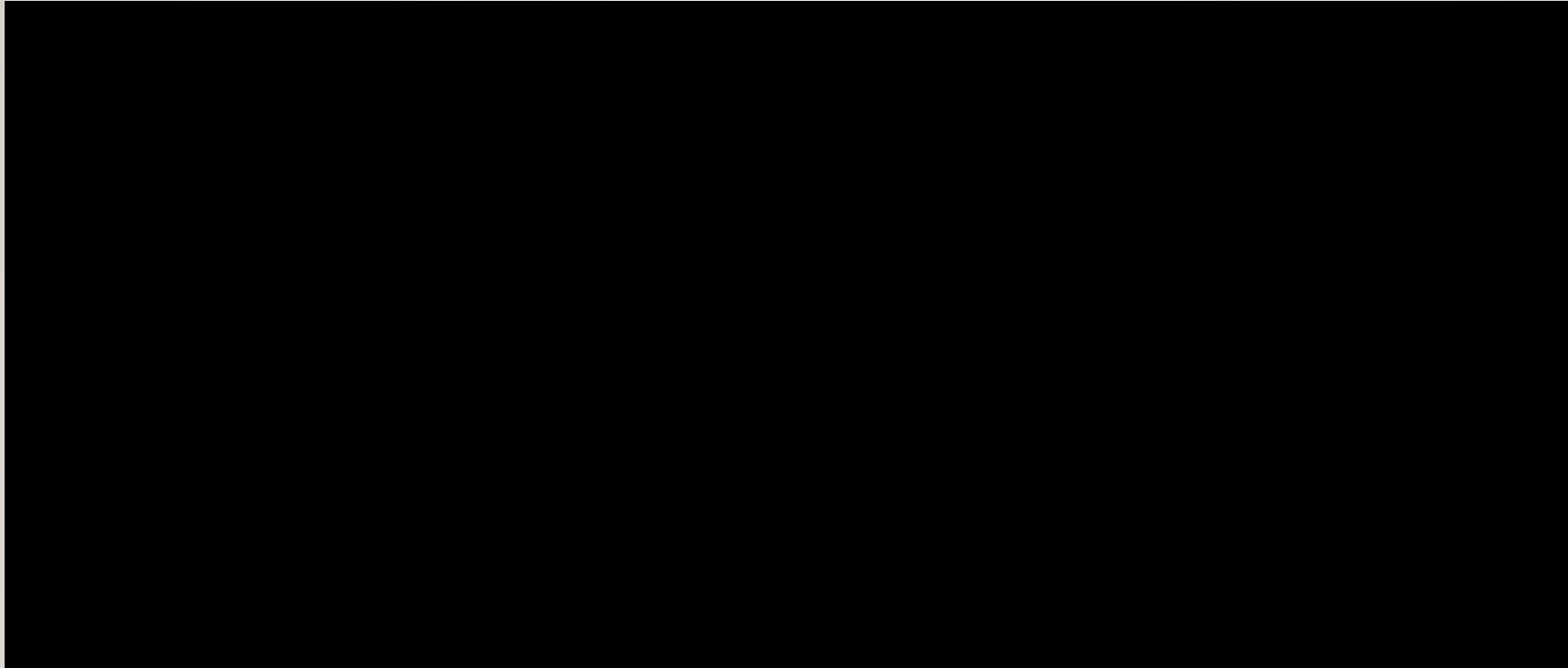


TIP #3 – USE EMPATHY



- See the issue from the other person's perspective
- How would YOU approach it if you were them?
- What motivating factors are involved?
- What solutions or compromises are possible?

REMINDER:
JUST DO RIGHT



THANK YOU!

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