



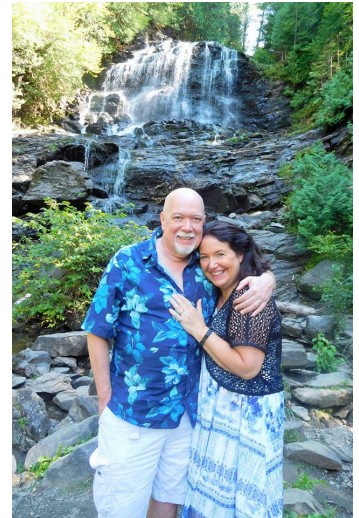
## Petri Dishes, Leaders, and Gratitude

Helping Leaders Find Their Voice, Take Action, and Get Results  
*Training and Coaching Services for Leaders and Managers in the Middle*

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### Welcome

My family is my reluctant, yet fertile, petri dish. Petri dishes are self-contained round clear bubbles you conduct experiments in. I was raised by deep-rooted New Englanders who are always fine and say things are always good. This "never speak up" background was what probably what made communication and being a public speaker hard work. I am insatiably curious about conflicts. It took ten years of experimentation before my future husband, Steve, and I finally partnered in our first successful conflict resolution. This was number three on my checklist of "musts" before committing to each other for life. Flush with the success of our first fight, we eloped in August to marry against the backdrop of a beautiful waterfall in northern NH. Afterward, we celebrated by hiking. (In case you were wondering, the toilet paper goes over, not under, once again demonstrating the enormous power of transparency and compromise.)



Speaking of indispensable skills, in this newsletter you'll see we are offering a free [webinar on "Gratitude in the Workplace."](#) If you can't make it, sign up and I'll send you the material afterwards. There is also my five-star book review of Good Authority. Finally, I've also listed my top three favorite key note speech topics. Yes, one is on difficult communication.

In gratitude, learning, and love for my petri dishes,

Star

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## Petri Dishes and Leadership

What is leadership? One definition is: Effective leadership is creating motivated and inspired team members that successfully deliver, despite difficulties. When facing new challenges, we never know what will work. We are always conducting our own situational experiments in effective leadership. In other words, your workplace is just one big petri dish.



Many situations call for targeted (read difficult) communication. Difficult conversations are, well, difficult. You know the interactions I'm referring to - the ones you avoid day after day, resulting in emotional stress for both you and your team member. Can you learn to embrace them? You can. It requires skills, courage and practice to learn how to most positively leverage the apparently negative. It is well worth it; leaders who have learned to master difficult conversations are often the most influential and trusted.

I strive to be one of those people who, after a difficult conversation with a team member, everyone leaves feeling buoyed by optimism knowing that something positive has been accomplished. I'm getting better and am not there yet. Even after over 30 years of practicing, it's still difficult.

I've learned that no matter how many concepts you learn and apply, it won't be enough. Unless you are authentically investing in building trusted, proactive, and positive relationships, you simply can't be effective. Even worse, you and your team member will both know it. Given that, it's natural to fear that difficult conversation will worsen the situation rather than help it. Here are two methods to make sure that doesn't happen:



**#1 - Frame it** - Think about the two phrases "I have a dream" and "I am not a crook." It's not difficult to place them or to remember who spoke those words. They were powerful frames to famous speeches, setting such a strong tone we can barely remember the rest. Which resonates more with you? By framing the difficult conversation early on, the rest will

flow more easily. Here's an example: your project is late, and you need to tell an important sponsor.

**Step One:** Determine the goal of the difficult conversation. Some options are to inform, problem solve, or get approval. Example Goal: Inform sponsor the project is late.

**Step Two:** Be specific, and script it out in as much detail as possible.

Plan: Date/Time/Location,

Prepare: Objections, reasons, roles, plan forward, tone, expected outcome

**Example of a Frame:** "I'd like to talk about the (successes/outcome/vision) of the project."

**Step Three:** Practice and role play.

**Step Four:** Have the conversation.

**Step Five:** Follow-up; analyze what went well and what to do differently next time.

If the conversation is on the phone, your tone and phrasing will make a difference. Try saying this simple sentence, "The project is late," first emphasizing "project" and then "late." It's a subtle way to change the focus.

These five expanded steps in framing the conversation are powerful and work. If you don't have time for all five steps, start with determining the goal of a conversation and create an appropriate frame.

**#2 - Collect Yeses** - Repeat after me, "Yes, yes, and yes." "Yes" is a positive word. Just saying "yes" is easy, affirming, and promises something good. How do you find the "yes?" Seek out common areas of interests, ideas and beliefs to create trust and build positive interactions. An age-old technique for negotiation and influencing is to collect as many spoken yeses as you can before the objections.

Here's an example that led to an agreement to enter marriage:

**Question:** I understand the way the toilet paper roll hangs is very important to you. (note framing) Do you know I love you?

**Answer:** "Yes."

**Question:** Do you know that resolving conflicts is #3 on my list of reasons to get married?

**Answer:** "Yes."

**Question:** Did you know that I have been giving great thought to this matter; is it ok to go on?

**Response:** "Yes."

**Question:** Will you be willing to listen to me for three minutes before speaking?

**Answer:** "Yes."

(Facts, feelings, blah, blah.)

**Question:** Can we agree that I don't care which way the toilet paper roll goes?

**Answer:** "Yes."

**Question:** Can we agree to disagree?

**Answer:** "Yes."

**The Question:** Want to get married?

**The Answer:** "Yes."

Being positive in a negative situation is not naïve, it's leadership 101. Be brave; start a conversation that matters. These two approaches are just part of my keynote topic of Difficult Conversations.

## [Five Star Amazon Book Review](#)

**Good Authority: How to Become the Leader Your Team is Waiting For**  
By Jonathan Raymond

One conversation at a time is how the author is committed to making work a great place to be. It's about turning upside down the belief that managers tell those that work for them what to do. Those who work for the manager say what is needed. Managers must learn to be engaging and take ownership of employee engagement. I work with top-performing middle managers, and so much of what he is saying rings true. (I hear his five fallacies of employee engagement every week.) The manager's job is to set boundaries and keep everyone accountable while listening to the cultural conversations and creating behaviors that make it a great place to be. Raymond says: "The health of a culture is equal to the ability of the people who work in it to feel the impacts of their actions on others." He also talks about both listening to and seeing culture. I am going to use his levels of accountability – The Mention, The Invitation, The Conversation, The Boundary, and The Limit. It's obvious terminology and Raymond employs great examples to illustrate.

What is excellent about this book is that it's a model with real stories to illustrate recommended actions and examples of application. The last chapters are about the five employee archetypes and three leadership archetypes. Identifying these types is a way to start a conversation, suggest a growth path, and organize an approach to improving the workplace. Have the conversation no matter how uncomfortable and plan for it in advance using this book. It's well written, concise, and specific. This book is going to be my holiday gift to managers. I am giving this practical and interesting book five stars not just because I agree with it, but because it's also well done.

[My Review](#)

## Upcoming Events

**Webinar:**

**Gratitude in Business**

**Free, 1 Hour**

**Friday, December 16, 12:30 ET**

**To register [Click Here](#)**

Gratitude is not just for the holidays. What does it mean to be grateful in the workplace? How can a practice of gratitude be used while balancing the need to act, accept responsibility, and deal out appropriate consequences? When using gratitude for difficult situations and projects gone wrong, it can replace the behaviors of blame, finger-pointing, excuse-making, and will inspire or motivate others. Come have fun, learn how to play the glad game, share your stories, and hear ours and leave feeling a little bit more grateful.

## About Us: Keynote Speaking, Coaching Programs for Leaders, Workshops

### Coaching Match Making, and Customized Process

We create a process tailored to your needs as well as offering a variety of coaches and coaching styles to find the right match for you! We have over 20 talented and

experienced coaches; many are ready to start now.

## **Keynote Speaking Favorites (We are booking for March 2017 and beyond):**

### ***Difficult Conversations: How to Make Them Work for You***

While every leader faces the challenge of difficult conversations, few know how to have them. Thus, important communication often fails to occur or, when it does, is either ineffective or harmful. Successful leaders know how to leverage this difficult task to build trust and accountability in their organization. Come laugh, get insights, and hear stories that have helped Star and her clients turn an apparent negative into a foundational trust-building tool. You will learn ideas that you can try right away.

### ***Leadership at the Movies: Lessons from Hollywood***

Who said training must be boring? We only need to look to Hollywood to find relevant leadership examples and important lessons. By using short clips from well-known movies as a platform, Star highlights key leadership techniques and models. These are then explored through real-life business examples and applied to specific situations. Participants will engage in entertaining interactive exercises to reinforce learned strategies. Come with an open mind; you'll leave with a personal action plan along with new and creative ideas to invigorate your leadership approach.

### ***Leader, Coach, or Manager? What hat should I wear now?***

Different scenarios call for different oversight "hats." While leading, coaching, or managing may seem similar on the surface, they are distinctly different in style and impact. Acquiring the skills needed to appropriately match your approach to various situations requires specialized awareness and analysis of both your natural style and the specific purpose and structure of your work group. Learn the difference between these three roles and how you and your specific needs fit the picture. Knowing what "hat" you should wear when will ensure you optimize team dynamics to achieve the results you want.



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