

# Deescalating Conflict Ceremony

## **A simple method for deescalating drama in many different situations.**

### **Purpose**

To deescalate dramatic complaints in phone calls, meetings, employee interactions, training classes, and other social environments and to surface possible solutions to the underlying problem.

### **Preparation**

The Clean Facilitator needs to be trained in Clean Language and the Clean Questions used for deescalating drama.

### **Participants (roles)**

Clean Facilitator, Concerned Individual

### **Pattern**

Open—A Concerned Individual mentions they have a concern, complaint, or problem.

Execute—The Clean Facilitator explores the concern, complaint, or problem using clean questions. These Clean Questions require intense listening by the Clean Facilitator who invites elaboration and exploration of the problem. The Clean Facilitator uses two special questions for elaboration:

1. “And is there anything else about (the concern, complaint, or problem)?”
2. “What kind-of (thing) is the (thing)?”

When asking clean questions of the Concerned Individual the Clean Facilitator mainly parrots the phrases of the Concerned Individual. That is the Clean Facilitator speaks the Concerned Individuals exact words back to them instead of paraphrasing them. The Clean Facilitator works hard to listen to their exact words and phrasing to ensure the Concerned Individual knows their words are heard.

Once the Clean Facilitator has explored the concern, complaint, or problem they reflect that back to the Concerned Individual with the following question, “And when (concern, complaint, or problem) what would you like to have happen?”

The Clean Facilitator waits for the Concerned Individual to clearly establish their desired outcome by giving their response to this question.

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“What would you like to have happen?” is the key deescalating conflict question. The Clean Facilitator acknowledges hearing the answer to “What would you like to have happen?” by parrot phrasing the response.

Close—The Clean Facilitator may close the ceremony at this point by simply restating what the Concerned Individual would like to have happen. Alternatively, the ceremony may continue as a Motivation In a Moment Ceremony (written separately) which explores how to create the outcome and the role of the Concerned Individual in making that outcome happen.

## Product

A spoken statement from the Concerned Individual of “What they would like to have happen” with respect to their concern, complaint, or problem.

## Tips

Clean Language is a questioning technique developed by psychotherapist David Grove.

The initial concern being investigated in a Deescalating Conflict Ceremony is explored using Clean Language where the facilitator listens intently to the words being used and mostly parrots then back to the person with the concern. The facilitator explores the concern using Clean Questions injecting a minimal number of the facilitator’s own words or phrasing. This ceremony is best performed by a facilitator trained and practiced in Clean Language.

The Concerned Individual does not need to know this ceremony or Clean Language to participate in the ceremony as they are simply responding to questions from the facilitator.

The core pattern for this ceremony comes from Clean Language and the book *From Contempt to Curiosity: Creating the Conditions for Groups to Collaborate Using Clean Language and Systemic Modelling* by Caitlin Walker. Caitlin Walker credits her sources in her book.

Additional reading on Clean Language is *Clean Language: Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds* by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees. Also *Metaphors in Mind: Transformation Through Symbolic Modelling* by James Lawley & Penny Tompkins.

Caitlin Walker, Wendy Sullivan, and Judy Rees all provide training in Clean Language and in the use of this ceremony which may be given a different name or description.