

PRESENCE

Over the last few weeks I've interviewed four coaching colleagues to learn what they think are the crucial elements of a great conversation. Every expert I've spoken with highlighted the importance of *presence*. Presence means more than just being in the room for a conversation, it means being open and available to the communication and setting ego aside in service to connection. Every coach has a different way of being present, but all agree that doing so is crucial to hosting a good conversation. Based on my conversations with other professionals and my own experience, here are my top five components of presence. You'll need to find your own way of cultivating these skills but keeping them in mind will help you in your conversations.

Beginning: As the host you set the tone for the conversation. This begins when you enter the room. How you walk in and greet your conversation partners matters. Taking a moment to enter consciously also gives you the chance to read the room. The first things you say and the first question you ask creates a starting point for the whole engagement. Make sure those communications set the tone you want for the meeting.



Body: Paying attention to your body has a grounding effect and can be a source of strength and stability in a hard conversation. It's a good idea to take moment to breathe consciously before a conversation. You may even want to invite all the participants to start the meeting this way. 1 to 3 minutes of silence to get in touch with our bodies and get present can make a big difference.



Listening: Listening is the most important part of my coaching technique. The most challenging part of listening is keeping your comments at bay. These comments can be external in the form of interruptions, or they can be internal - creating your own personal monologue in competition with the speaker. We all do this and it's hard to stop but challenge yourself to recognize when your mind wanders and to refocus on the speaker.



Curiosity: Great conversations create great solutions. Stay curious about what the other person has to say and allow yourself to be surprised.

Celebration: There are strengths and things to celebrate in every group and in every person. Make sure those positive things are present in the room during important conversations. Asking questions like "When have you seen your colleague do their best work" or "What have you appreciated today?" can help bring strengths to light.