

Before You React, Assume or Decide

A 3 C's Guide to Beginning a Difficult Conversation

Pause. Create awareness. Find your next step.

When you feel hurt, worried, or unsure what to say, it can be easy to react before you understand the whole situation. The 3 C's offer three questions to help you prepare for a more thoughtful conversation.

AWARENESS BEFORE REACTION

Content: What do I **KNOW** - and what do I still need to **KNOW**?

Compassion: What do I need to **UNDERSTAND**?

Connection: Who or what do I need to **REACH**?

WHY THIS CAN HELP

Pausing can help you separate facts from assumptions, notice feelings and needs, and choose a clearer next step. Use it in family relationships, caregiving, health care, work, or everyday decisions - including a check-in with yourself.

AN EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Someone close to you has not returned your calls. You feel hurt and think, "They don't care about me." Before responding, pause and check your 3 C's.

CONTENT

"I know they haven't returned my calls. I don't know why."

COMPASSION

"My hurt matters. They may be overwhelmed or need space. I can ask rather than guess."

CONNECTION

"I can reach out calmly: We haven't connected lately, and I miss you. How have you been?"

The shift: you move from deciding what their silence means to making room for a conversation.

Understanding does not mean excusing hurtful behavior. A thoughtful next step may also include a boundary.

Prepare With Your 3 C's

Choose a conversation, a decision, or a situation within yourself.

Type in the boxes, then save a copy in your PDF reader. Or print and write.

The situation I want to understand:

1. CONTENT

What do I KNOW - and what do I still need to KNOW?

What I know: What are the facts? What have I actually noticed?

What I need to know: What am I assuming? What needs clarification?

2. COMPASSION

What do I need to UNDERSTAND?

What am I feeling or needing? What might someone else be experiencing?

If this is about me, what would a kinder, honest response to myself look like?

3. CONNECTION

Who or what do I need to REACH?

Who could I speak with? What information, resource, or support could help?

What do I need to ask for - for myself or for this conversation?

What has changed now that I have paused?

Begin the Conversation

You do not have to solve everything in one conversation.

START WITH WHAT YOU NOTICED

"I noticed _____, and I wanted to check in. How have things been for you?"

WHEN SOMETHING HAS HURT YOU

"When _____ happened, I felt _____. I'd like to understand how you saw it."

WHEN YOU NEED TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

"I'm finding _____ difficult. Could you help me with _____?"

Choose a time when you both have room to talk. Ask one question, pause, and listen. If emotions rise, you can agree to take a break and return to the conversation.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

My opening sentence - to someone else or to myself:

One question I want to ask someone else or myself:

My next step - and when I will take it:

**Content brings clarity. Compassion keeps us human.
Connection helps us move forward.**

WANT TO EXPLORE THIS FURTHER?

For updates on a companion workbook with more guided practice, contact Mary Jo at profamilycares@gmail.com or visit profamilycare.com.

If a conversation could put you at risk, seek support before approaching the person. This guide is for reflection and communication; it is not a substitute for professional care.