

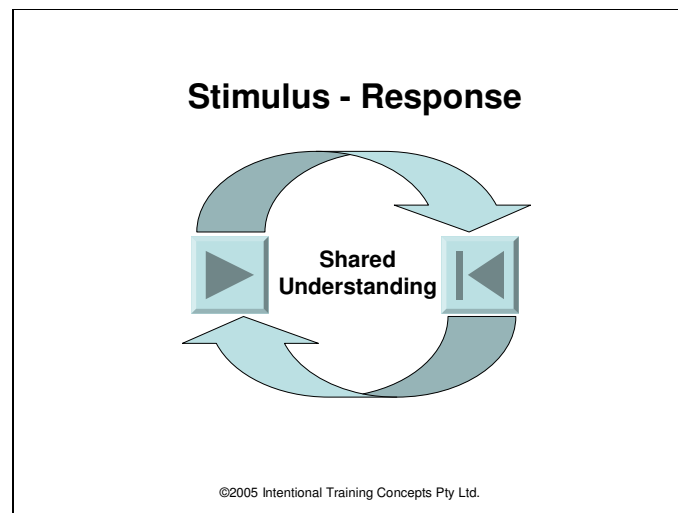
OWL!

Responding wisely when the stakes are high

Adapted from:

- Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2002). *Crucial conversations: Conversational tools for talking when the stakes are high*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gallwey, W.T. (2002). *The inner game of work: Overcoming mental obstacles for maximum performance*. London, UK: TEXERE Publishing.

It's easy to assume that the truth about a situation is in our own judgment. We get frustrated when others can't see what seems perfectly obvious to us. We react defensively or push the other person into self-defensive behaviours. This usually happens when our responses are *automatic*. There is an immediate synaptic jump between stimulus and response with no time to *think*. Yet the reality about any given situation lies in our *shared understanding* of what's happening. A wise response is to put a [pause] between what's said to you and how you *choose* to reply.



Observations: Declare your specific (behavioural) *observations* of the situation as clearly and accurately as you can.

- “My *observations* of (the situation) are...”

Alternatively, invite the respondent to clarify the situation as they see it.

- “What are you (specifically) *observing* about (the situation)...?”

Or push for greater clarity of common understanding.

- “So, let me see if I understand this – what you’re *observing* about (the situation) is...?”

What’s at stake: Declare the (likely) critical consequences of the situation if left unchanged as you see it.

- “*What’s at stake* here is...”

Or invite the respondent to put the situation into context.

- “*What* do you think is *at stake* here?”

Lead into discussion: Invite open sharing of viewpoints.

- “How do you see (the situation)...?”
- “What’s your view...?”