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PRINCIPLES

- 1—Master the Courage to Interrogate Reality
- 2—Come Out from Behind Yourself into the Conversation and Make It Real
- 3—Be Here, Prepared to Be Nowhere Else
- 4—Tackle Your Toughest Challenge Today
- 5—Obey Your Instincts
- 6—Take Responsibility for Your Emotional Wake
- 7—Let Silence Do the Heavy Lifting

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# Fierce Conversations

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2022

## Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time

*Fierce Conversations* creates a framework to start and navigate tough conversations with employees, friends, and loved ones. Susan states seven foundational principles to a successful and fierce conversations. A fierce conversations will aid in overcoming barriers in conversations, will help handling strong emotions in the conversations, will help develop relationships through conversation, will improve clarity and understanding in conversation, and will help with connecting with employees, friends, and loved ones.

*Fierce Conversations* provides insight into how any conversation

can impact the trajectory of a relationship. Susan writes, “our careers, our companies, our relationships, and indeed our very lives succeed or fail, gradually, then suddenly, one conversation at a time.” (p. 2).

A fierce conversation is not a cruel or threatening conversation, but instead is an opportunity to have a real conversation that interrogates reality, provokes learning, tackles challenges, and enriches relationships. Susan believes that the conversation is the relationship and through practicing the believes and strategies in her book, we can successfully navigate team, coaching,

delegation, and confrontational conversations.

NEWLY REVISED AND UPDATED  
National Bestseller

**FIERCE  
CONVERSATIONS**

Achieving Success  
at Work & in Life,  
One Conversation  
at a Time

**SUSAN SCOTT**  
Foreword by KEN BLANCHARD, PhD

## Susan Scott

Susan Scott founded ‘Fierce’ in 2001 after over a decade of leadership experience directly helping large company CEO’s. Susan has spent over 10,000 hours having conversations with senior management through executive coaching and leadership development. Susan shares her expertise

in, “Fierce Conversations” with the caveat that, no one single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, business, or marriage, but any one single conversation can. Susan has also authored other Fierce books including *Fierce Love* and *Fierce Leadership*.



# Principle 1 - Master the Courage to Interrogate Reality

## Issue Preparation Form Template

### The Issue Is:

*Be concise. In one or two sentences, get to the heart of the problem. Is it a challenge, opportunity, decision, strategy, or recurring problem?*

### It Is Significant Because:

*What's at stake? How does this affect dollars, income, people, products, services, customers, or other relevant factors? What is the future impact of the issue is not resolved?*

### My Ideal Outcome Is:

*What specific results do i/we want? In other words, assuming we get this right, what good things will occur? What and who will be affected?*

### Relevant Background Information:

*Summarize with bulleted points: How, when, why, and where did the issue start? Who are the key players? Which forces are at work? What is the issue's current status?*

### What I/We Have Done up to This Point?

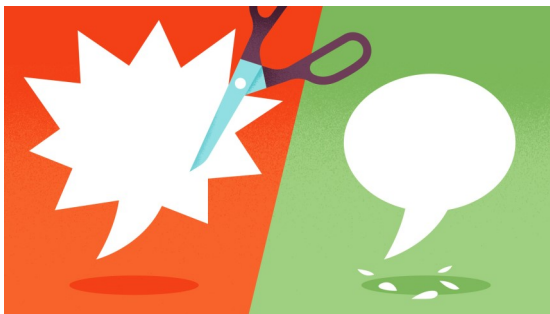
*What steps, successful or unsuccessful, have been taken so far?*

### The Option I Am Considering:

*What options am I considering? What option would I choose if I had to decide now, without any input from the group?*

### The Help I Want from the Group Is:

*What I want from the group; Tel me what I'm missing. What are you seeing that I might not be seeing? Suggest solutions, consequences I may have missed,, where to find more information, critique of the current plan.*



Principle 1 focuses on creating a plan to navigate tough conversations. People create their own opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and truths that determine how to interpret a message. Context determines how we experience the content in our lives (p. 36). By rearranging context, we can empower ourselves and those around us to have fierce conversations. For example, by shifting our mindset away from “I’ll keep my mouth shut; this is a job for the experts” to “My point of view is as valid as anyone else’s” an individual can be empowered to help create change. A leader’s job in an organization is to empower those around them in order to believe in themselves and those around them.

When a problem arises in an organization, the “Issue Preparation Form Template” can be used to name and solve the problem. The template must be used to identify the problem, the meeting invite and expectations must be sent out to participants, the template must be used to guide conversation during the meeting, and the meeting must be completed by telling participants what you’ve heard and collecting input and ideas.

### No more Buts

By removing the word “but” from your vocabulary and changing it with the word “and” the conversation acknowledges that both realities are true.

- “I’d like to help you on this project **but** I am running out of time and need to make decisions that are best for the organization. I need you to deliver with minimal involvement on my part.”
- “I’d like to help you on this project **and** I am running out of time and need to make decisions that are best for the organization. I need you to deliver with minimal involvement on my part.”



# Principle 2 - Come Out from Behind Yourself into the Conversation and Make It Real

## Stump Speech

A personal Fierce Conversation, otherwise known as a “Stump Speech” (p. 104) provides opportunity to reflect on your life. Clarify what you want and don’t allow your inner critic to edit your answers to the following questions. If you answer any of the following questions with “I don’t know” ask yourself what it would be if you did know.

- Where am I going?
- Why am I going there?
- Who is going there with me?
- How will I get there?



## Personal Reflection

“How you spend our days is how we spend our lives.” (p. 101)

Reflect on how you feel about yourself, your life, and your work. Think of several words or phrases that capture your thoughts and emotions.

**MYSELF**

**MY LIFE**

**MY WORK**



## The Fierce Leader

*Weak leaders want agreement. Strong leaders want the truth (p. 87).*

1. Telling the “truth” is complicated. Leaders often don’t know the whole picture of the organization and work alongside employees who withhold information for fear of retribution.
2. Two members within the same organization may see two different truths. “I have my truth and you have your truth, but my truth is truer than yours.”
3. Human nature is hardwire to life to protect itself and others.

What to do if your organization is under scrutiny?

- Keep telling the truth.
- Own up to mistakes.
- Be clear with solutions, strategy, and invite input from others.
- Be open to employee conversations.
- Stay calm and grounded.
- Remain open and available to those who don’t believe you.

# Principle 3 - Be Here, Prepared to Be Nowhere Else

## Mole Whacking

Susan Scott describes “mole whacking” as having to constantly deal with small, repetitive, and monotonous tasks. The term was created through a story where a property owner was dealing with a mole infestation. The property owner was always physically dealing with each mole instead of thinking outside of the box and finding an alternative solution. In the mole whacking example, the property owner killed the food source of the moles so they eventually moved out. “The Decision Tree” is a model that can be used to find alternatives to mole whacking.



### Common Mistakes during one-to-one conversations (p. 128):

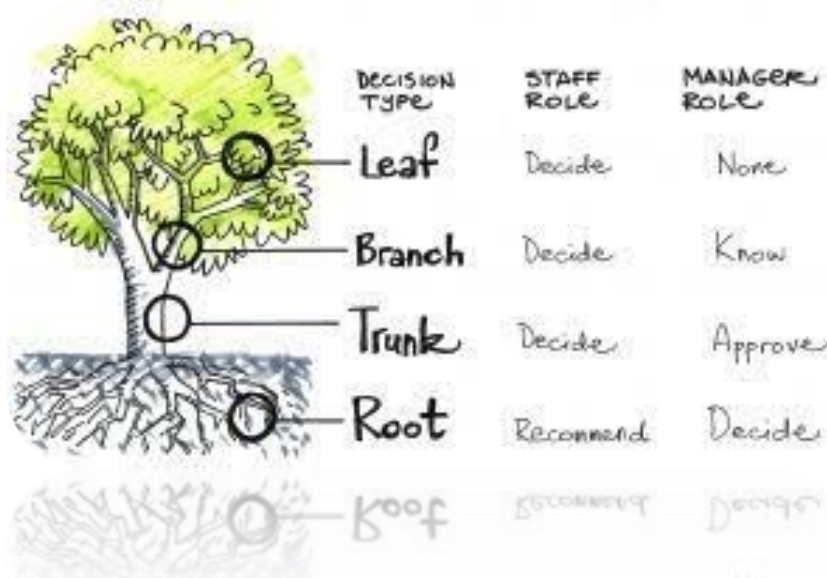
1. Doing most of the talking.
2. Taking the problem away from someone.
3. Not inquiring about emotions.
4. Delivering unclear messages, unclear coaching, and unclear instructions.
5. Canceling the meeting.
6. Allowing interruptions.
7. Running out of time.
8. Moving too quickly from question to question.
9. Assuming your one-to-ones are effective.

### Mineral Rights Conversations (p. 131)

1. What is the most important thing you and I should be talking about?
2. Describe the issue.
3. How is this impacting you?
4. If nothing changes, what are the implications?
5. How have you helped create this issue or situation?
6. What is the ideal outcome?
7. What's the best step you can take to begin to resolve this issue?

## The Decision Tree

When employees need to make decisions, they should use the tree model to decide how much notice their leader needs.



# Principle 4 - Tackle Your Toughest Challenge Today



## Giving Challenging Feedback (p. 165)

**When and Where** - Describe the situation, when it happened, where it happened. (i.e. Yesterday in the staff meeting...)

**What** - What did you see? Describe what happened or what they did just like a video camera would capture it. What did they do or say that is important to give them feedback on? (i.e. you took a call during lunch while I was talking to you)

What the other may do:

- They may deny that it happened
- They may defend their perspective
- They may deflect in order to change the subject

## Giving Positive Feedback (p. 175)

**When and Where** - Describe the situation, when it happened, where it happened. (i.e. I was impressed with how prepared you were for today's presentation...)

**What** - Describe the actions with plenty of details. (i.e. You came to the meeting with your agenda polished and ready to present, and you also come prepared to answer questions that weren't on the agenda.)

**Why** - Describe the significance for you and others and the potential impact for them. (i.e. Your thoroughness and the way you responded to comments and questions reflected well on you and our department).

### Steps to **Confront**

1. Name the issue.
2. Select a specific example that illustrates the behaviour or situation you want to change.
3. Describe your emotions about this issue.
4. Clarify what is at stake.
5. Identify your contribution to this problem.
6. Indicate your wish to resolve the issue.
7. Invite your partner to respond.

*Try and do the above steps in no more than 60 seconds.*

*"Burnout happens, not because we're trying to solve problems, but because we've been trying to solve the same problem over and over." (p. 146)*

# Principle 5 - Obey Your Instincts

## Personal Integrity Scan (p. 229)

- Write down your **core values**. Does your behaviour align with your core values?
- What must you do to change your behaviour?
- When are you going to change your behaviour?

## Corporate Integrity Scan (p. 232)

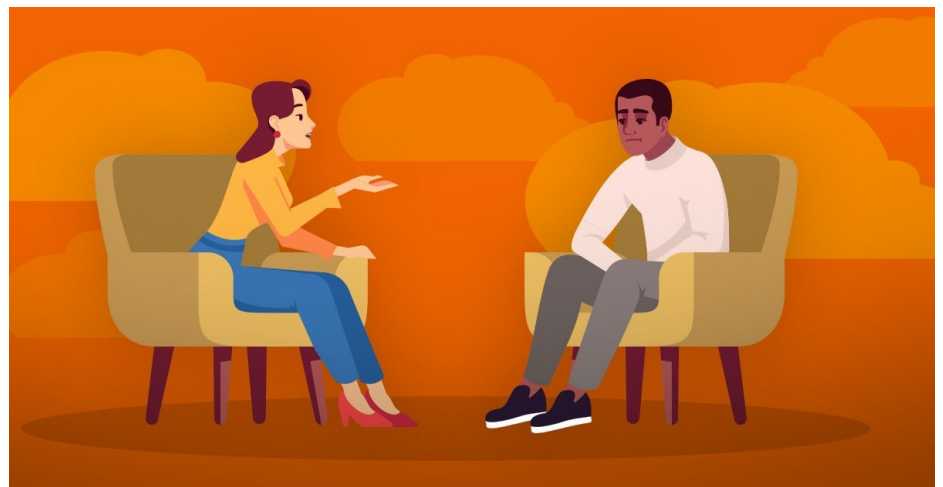
- Why are we here? In other words, what do we do for our customers that matters to them?
- What is our ideal relationship with one another?
- What is our ideal relationship with customers?
- What contribution do we wish to make to our local or global community?

### Key Points (p. 234)

- ♦ A careful conversation is a failed conversation.
- ♦ During each conversation, listen for more than content. Listen for emotion and intent as well.
- ♦ Act on your instincts rather than passing them over for fear that you could be wrong or that you might offend someone.
- ♦ Watch what happens to the conversation when you do this.
- ♦ Invite your partner to do the same.



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# Principle 6 - Take Responsibility for Your Emotional Wake



## AIM FOR THE CHOPPING BLOCK

*Instead of worrying about which words to use (i.e. chopping the wood), consider the message that you're trying to send (i.e. aim for the chopping block, not the wood).*

- You have the right to get your core needs met
- You have the right to ask dumb questions
- You have the right not to be a victim
- You have the right to confront issues that are troubling you
- You have the right to disagree
- You have the right to say yes

## Stump Speech (p. 240)

- Where are we doing?
- Why are we going there?
- Who is going with us?
- How are we going to get there?
- What are our core values?



## Key Points (p. 273)

- In any important relationship, there is no trivial comment.
- Give to others what you want to receive.
- Live the principles you are intent on learning.
- To deliver the message without the load, clarify your intent.
- When you get triggered, become a strong and resilient.
- Complete the conversation.

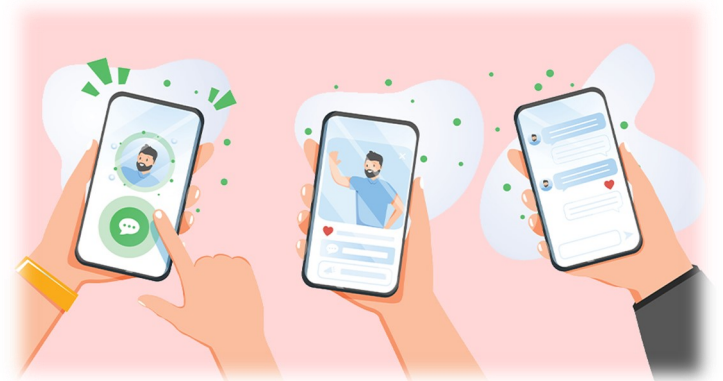
## Do's and Don't of Texting (p. 253)

### Do Use Text To...

- Communicate logistics and directive statements
- Share small praises and appreciation
- Connect on special occasions
- Talk through simple scenarios

### Don't Use Text To...

- Convey more than three sentences of thoughts at a time—a novel is not appropriate
- Talk about complex emotional thoughts
- Share Confidential Information
- Confront someone



# Principle 7 - Let Silence Do the Heavy Lifting

Assignment (p. 295)

1 = entirely false

10 = entirely true

There are no undiscussables in our company/family

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

There are no hidden agendas in our company/family

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

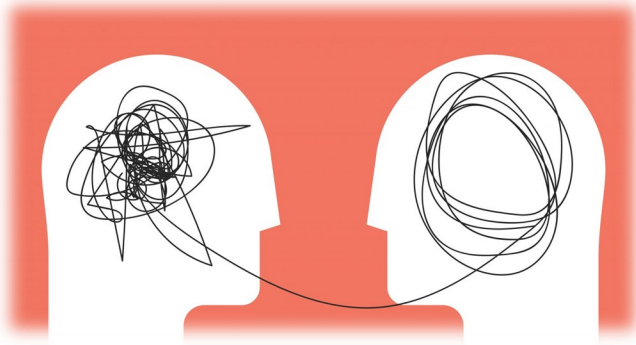
During meetings we say what we think, invite differing views, and explore one another's thinking

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

There is permission in our company/family for everyone to know up

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can you do to improve?



Key Points (p. 296)

- Talk *with* people, not *at* them.
- The more emotionally loaded the subject, the more silence is required.
- Use silence to slow down a conversation so that you can discover what the conversation really wants to be about.
- Allow silence to fill in the greater meaning that needs to be there.
- Allow silence to teach you how to feel.

Checklist (p.289)

*A list of ways we rationalize our fear, silence, and avoid reality.*

- "What do I know? She's the expert."
- "No use saying anything. He Doesn't care what I think."
- "I have no idea what needs to happen here, so it's best to keep my mouth shut and pretend I'm tracking."
- "Nothing I say will make any difference."
- "She's just going through a hard time, just needs to talk. I have thoughts, but she won't want to hear them."
- "I'm bored, fatigued, impatient with this person. I'll adopt an attitude of polite indifference and hope it's over soon."

