

Better Listening

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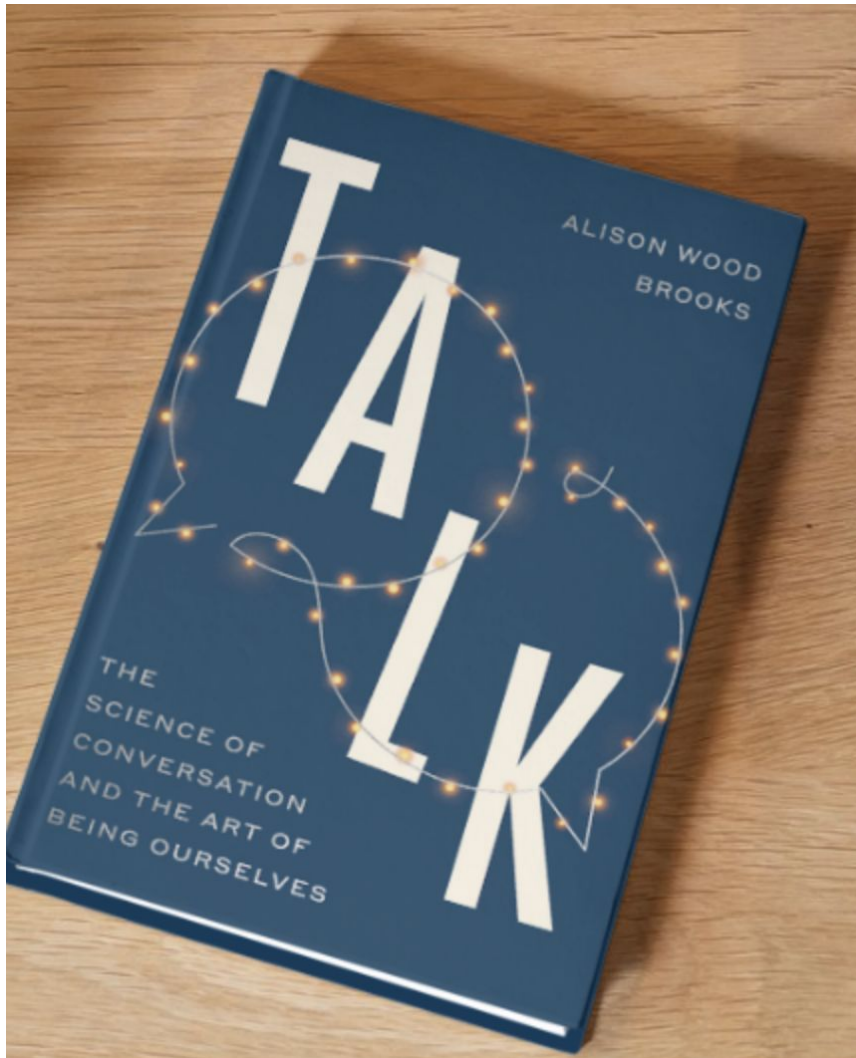
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TALK by Alison Wood Brooks (HBS)



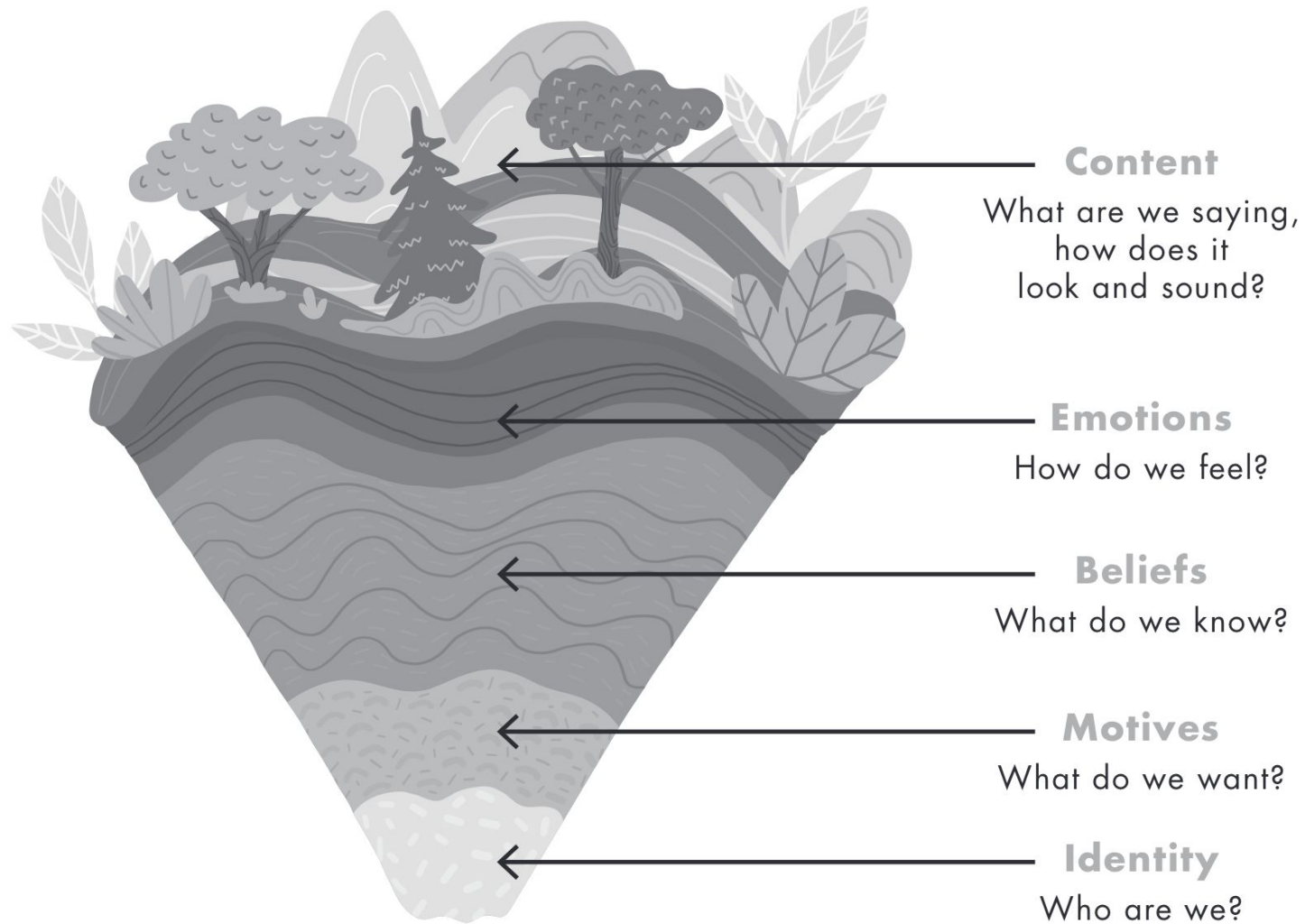
T – Topics

A – Asking

L – Levity

K - Kindness

What do we see (and not see) while we're talking?



Source: Alison Wood Brooks

Conversation in three steps

Step 1: *Awareness* (of all the important stuff happening under the surface of a conversation)

Step 2: *Validation/Affirmation*

Step 3: Decide *how to respond*
(agree, disagree, ask for more information, switch topics, give space...)

Too often we skip steps 1 and 2!

Sequential Affirmation Exercise

Each person will share - *What is making you nervous these days?*

Then the next person will go. Before they share their answer, they must start by validating the person who came before them.

Don't ask follow-up questions. But DO validate the person who came before you before sharing your own perspective.

Go around and around until we stop you.

Beware of well-intentioned **invalidation**

HBS-er #1: I am really worried I am not going to get a job

HBS-er #2: Don't worry! You are so smart and great – it will be fine!

How about... It makes total sense that you are feeling nervous and stressed. It's a big decision and there is lots of uncertainty. I think you are so smart and will do great, but I know that's hard to believe when you are deep in the middle of this.

Phrases that can help to affirm and validate others

It makes sense that _____ made you feel _____.

I believe you.

That must have been so _____ for you.

I appreciate what you said/how you feel.

I really connected with the idea that _____.

When you said _____, it really resonated with me because...

What is making you nervous these days?

Phrases that can help to affirm and validate others

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I really connected with the idea that _____.

When you said _____, it really resonated with me because...

Affirming is NOT the same as agreeing!



Open Dialogues within and across Medical Humanities

Karen Thornber (thornber@fas.harvard.edu)

Harry Tuchman Levin Professor in Literature, Professor of East Asian
Languages and Civilizations

Richard L. Menschel Faculty Director, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and
Learning

General Education 1078: Disease, Illness, and Health through Literature

Rationale for the course:

*At some point in our lives, most of us will develop a serious condition that requires extensive medical care. We are also likely to be called on to provide care for loved ones.

*Moreover, as COVID-19 has made glaringly apparent, racial, economic, social, and other inequalities mean many members of society are especially and disproportionately vulnerable to serious health conditions.

*Engaging with a diverse range of films, fiction, memoirs, creative non-fiction, life writing, and drama globally by physicians and other health professionals, patients, activists, and concerned citizens, this course helps us interrogate what it means to promote healing and well-being in our personal and professional lives.

Gen Ed 1078

Covers many controversial topics, as do all my courses

- Racism and Health
- Mental Illness via Memoir, Ethnography, and Film
- Culture, Care, and Family
- Caregiving across borders
- **End-of-life decisions and care – e.g., Amy Bloom's *In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss***

End-of-Life Decisions and Care

We READ: Amy Bloom's Memoir *In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss* –
Amy Bloom describes helping her husband, who had early onset Alzheimer's, die with dignity in Switzerland, via Dignitas.

FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX – given current Death-with-Dignity Policies

The memoir brings to the fore the paradoxes surrounding physician assistance with dying in cases of dementia or similar conditions. If one is still lucid, then one is seen as making the decision prematurely; but if one is no longer lucid, then one is not seen as capable of making such an important decision. How to resolve??

Class Discussion of this Memoir and Broader Issue

- Among the aims is to foster deep engagement with the memoir and the broader topic, and create an environment where students feel empowered to share their perspectives and ask questions
- SO, after outlining the different reasons used by the two primary sides of this issue (i.e., death-with-dignity options for individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia), I ask the students to work in pairs/small groups to discuss how communities might resolve what appears to be an unresolvable tension.

Why?

- This approach encourages students to think deeply about the pros and cons of diverse approaches to end-of-life decisions and care.
- It reveals to them even more starkly the impossibility of definitely answering some (many?) questions, and completely solving some (many?) problems.
- I.e., there is no one right or wrong way.
- AND, through these and similar exercises, enable students to feel better connected with one another, even if they disagree!

Now for the interactive part of today's program!

- I'd like you to divide yourselves into groups of 2-3
- Take different sides of this issue (even if it means taking a side with which you don't agree):
 - Individuals with dementia should be included in death-with-dignity policies
 - Individuals with dementia should not be included in these policies
- Brainstorm possible compromises/middle ground – be prepared to share with the class several options.



Multiple Narrative Framework

Adapted from [Dr. Samia Shoman](#) - Bridge Academy San Mateo CA

How we teach
– What we teach

History, me an engineer?

MTA workshop with Jess Feldman (Bard College)

Narration or representations
where *more than one* perspective
is represented

- *Activate this idea in the context of teaching
difficult subjects +*

What is our role as educators?

Can we agree that we want our students to:

- apply critical thinking skills
- synthesize what they are learning
- Develop confidence to become self-directed autonomous learners
- Collaborate with peers, professionalism

→ **Have to let students come to their
Own truths (t)**

Respect student's own learning journey

Students come from different social political & cultural identities, hold different life experiences and points of view

→ Have to let students reach their own conclusions, shift their thinking, resolve contradictions and construct new knowledge about the larger systems

- o.w Dissonance

Safe container -

Design a learning experience

Facilitate

Students build their systems of knowledge

Make room for transformations and shifting their
thinking (sometimes 1^o is good)

Plant seeds for continued learning

Doesn't end with your class

→ Frameworks x 2

Inductive vs. deductive reasoning

Use of Narratives (primary sources)

- Relatable: can help shift thinking
- Balance the idea of history as a **discipline based on facts** with the idea of history as a collection of human experiences & memories based on a **person's perspective**
- Recognizes that history exists in the participants' / authors' thoughts and assumptions
- Multiple perspectives and context co-exist:
 - e.g.: multiple history books with different narratives and perspectives on the same topic.

Multiple Narratives

When ... How

Different modalities: together or separate

Narratives + Frameworks → Students do the work

- Remove your own Bias
- Build Trust
- Relief?
- Maybe you will learn something too?

?

The African continent was almost wholly colonized by European powers during the period from the 1800s through World War I.

?

1. European contact with African indigenous populations brought the blessings of civilization and exposure to God to the “dark continent.”

2. The Europeans were invaders bent on stealing Africans’ resources and destroying their cultures

?

1. Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden”

2. Oral histories passed down about the spiritual & military leadership of Nehanda Nyakasikana (Zimbabwe)

Guess the categories

facts, perspectives, narratives, and truth framework

- **FACT**: Information that can be independently verified
- **PERSPECTIVE**: A particular attitude toward or way of thinking about something; point of view
- **NARRATIVE**: The stories we tell and/or believe to explain how a set of facts or events are connected to each other
- **YOUR TRUTH**: something every person creates for oneself —an **interpretation of facts** based on perspective and narrative

facts, perspectives, narratives, and truth framework

- Facts and truths are distinct
 - Facts are interpreted through perspectives
 - Based on these perspectives, we develop narratives
 - These narratives become our personal truths

This is how people can come to different truths from the same set of facts

FACT

The African continent was almost wholly colonized by European powers during the period from the 1800s through World War I.

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PERSPECTIVE

1. European contact with African indigenous populations brought the blessings of western civilization and exposure to Christianity to the “dark continent.”

2. The Europeans were invaders bent on stealing Africa's' resources and destroying their cultures

FACT

The African continent was almost wholly colonized by European powers during the period from the 1800s through World War I.

PERSPECTIVE

1. European contact with African indigenous populations brought the blessings of civilization and exposure to God to the “dark continent.”

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NARRATIVE

1. Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden”

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FACT

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NARRATIVE

1. Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden”

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YOUR TRUTH

I believe that while not all Europeans understood colonization as harmful, the extreme harm experienced by Africans means that it was nevertheless unjust and that justice lay in the struggle against colonization

Making room for transformations

Activate Prior Knowledge and beliefs

What are the narratives you have heard or learnt about _____ people, culture, and history?

What are the narratives you believe about _____ people, culture, and history?

Activate Self-Knowledge

Civic self-portrait that can be shared with group (influences, history, values, why are you here, your triggers) — came from [this site](#)

Awareness of privilege (*multiple* positions in systems of inequality) in the context of : power relations, Justice - Equity - Inclusion - Belonging, Systems of oppression, inequity, bias, prejudice ...

Anticipate, acknowledge and **balance** emotional with the cognitive components of learning

Self-regulation + co-regulation with peers

Community agreement

1. Engage constructively with alternative perspectives.
2. Recognize how your own social position (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability) and socialization informs your perspectives and reactions.
3. Let go of personal anecdotal evidence and look at broader patterns.
4. Differentiate between safety and comfort. Accept discomfort as necessary for growth.
5. Respect each other by asking for clarification and not making assumptions.
6. See all involved as human beings.

In order to remain in class, you must consent to abide by and uphold these agreements

Manifestations of Anti-Palestinian Racism include:

- denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians;
- failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine;
- erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians;
- excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies;
- defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values

Much of the dominant narrative about Palestinians reflects anti-Palestinian racism

- **Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives.**

Building Nimble and Democratic Minds: A model for fostering agency and strengthening democracy

Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana

Co-founders of The Right Question Institute and Adjunct Lecturers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, teaching: A130

HILT Open Dialogue Within and Across Disciplines, September 20, 2024,

College Presidents on What College Students Should Learn

“The primary skills should be analytical skills of interpretation and inquiry. In other words, know how to frame a question.”

-Leon Botstein, President of Bard College

“...the best we can do for students is have them ask the right questions.”

- Nancy Cantor, Former Chancellor of University of Illinois

Democracy and questions



“I believe unconditionally in the ability of people to respond when they are told the truth. We need to be taught to study rather than to believe, to inquire rather than to affirm.”

- **Septima Clark**

Producing Questions

1. Ask as many questions as you can
 2. Do not stop to answer, judge, or discuss
 3. Write down every question exactly as it is stated
 4. Change any statements into questions
- Which rule will be most difficult for you to follow?

The focus for your questions:

Building nimble and democratic minds

Remember to number your questions and follow the rules:

1. Ask as many questions as you can
2. Do not stop to answer, judge or discuss
3. Write down every question exactly as it is stated
4. Change any statements into questions

“A simple prompt can result in many different questions. People must ask a variety of questions in order to gain the information they desire. Additionally, not all questions are simple. There can be varying answers or no answer at all.”

“As my group and I made questions, I was able to see different perspectives and ideas.”

- First year students in the Harvard College Rising Scholar Program
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The Question Formulation Technique

1) Question Focus 2) **Produce** Your Questions

- ✓ Follow the rules
- ✓ Number your questions

3) **Improve** Your Questions

- ✓ Categorize questions as Closed or Open-ended
- ✓ Change one Open to Closed and one Closed to Open

4) **Strategize**

- ✓ Prioritize your questions
- ✓ Action plan or discuss next steps
- ✓ Share

5) **Reflect**

1. Ask as many questions as you can
2. Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer
3. Write down every question exactly as it is stated
4. Change statements into questions

Closed-Ended:

Answered with “yes,”
“no” or one word

Open-Ended: Require
longer explanation