

ACT NOW!

Move from avoidance to action

How to navigate difficult conversations and situations and move forward when you are feeling stuck

What you'll find in this document:

How to become aware

Why we avoid conversations or situations

What avoidance is costing you

The 3-step ACT Now! Model

Acknowledge and Assess

Clarify what you want

Take action

Are you aware of conversations or situations you are avoiding at work?

Becoming aware of what we are avoiding is critical.

Do you ever find yourself saying any of these things?

- They won't do what I want, even if I ask.
- They have other priorities and my priorities don't seem to get attention.
- She is not doing a good job, we are just not getting the results we need, but she has health issues now, so I'm not comfortable asking for more.

Or

- I am sure I should check in with him more, but what difference would it make.
- We are not getting the results we need as a team, some of it is because of how the team is working together.
- If I talk with him, it could get ugly.

Are you avoiding a conversation with someone who is:

- Not delivering the results he promised or you expected?
- Doing something you don't want her to do?
- At the point that you need to let him go?

Each of these situations are indicative of avoiding a conversation or controversial situation. Sometimes it is so easy to be busy with other stuff, that **we are not even aware that we are avoiding something.**

3 key questions to ask yourself

1. What or who am I avoiding?

Who are you avoiding dealing with on an issue of importance to you?
What are you not doing that you should be doing?

2. Why am I avoiding this conversation or situation?

3. What is avoidance costing me and potentially my team?

Avoidance.

We all avoid things.

You might be saying, sure Deborah, I know I am avoiding something.
But it is better left alone.

Perhaps that is right. Sometimes it is definitely better to not address issues and let them go.

And, I strongly encourage you to take a few minutes to look closely at what you are avoiding and what it is costing you.

It might lead you to a different conclusion.

Let's look at why we might be avoiding

The 3 general reasons why we avoid difficult conversations or situations

1. We don't know what to do or how to do something.

It could be how to have a difficult conversation with an employee, a peer or a boss. Maybe it is how to do the next thing in your business or on a project.

This is up for me now. I have worked in Fortune 500 companies, start-ups and non-profits for over 30 years. I am really good at doing the things I know how to do. But, I am new to the online education world of creating and offering online courses. I find myself stopped when I don't know what to do next.

I get easily distracted with other things on my to-do list or the ever-present email. I tend to fall into the trap of needing to learn more and more before I act. There are definitely times I do know pretty much what to do and I am avoiding just taking the next step.

Fortunately, practicing the steps in ACT gets me back in motion in the direction I want to go in.

2. We don't like feeling uncomfortable.

In fact, we tend to structure our time to be in our comfort zone.

3. We fear the reaction we will get.

Most of us don't want to hurt or upset someone. You might be afraid that the conversation will leave the person feeling angry or upset with you. Or you fear he/she might do something that could be harmful to you, others or your company. If this is the case it is appropriate to evaluate options. See more below.

What is avoidance costing you?

What is not getting done?

What is not happening because of not addressing the issue you are avoiding?

How is this impacting you?

Physically – we often feel tension and could even get ill when avoiding important issues.

Emotionally – it is common to feel stress or angry, sometimes taking it out on others who have nothing to do with the issue we are avoiding. Are you ruminating on the issue, talking to people ‘about it’ but ‘not doing anything’ about the situation?

How is avoiding the issue impacting others in your company?

Are others unable to do their work because of someone is not delivering results?
Is someone doing something you have said is not acceptable?

Let’s take bullying others on the team.

When team members see someone who is bullying others and nothing is done about it, what is the impact of that? A common interpretation is that it is okay with management. Perhaps they assume that is even encouraged behavior.

If there are no consequences for behaviors you do not condone, the implicit message is: it is okay to do those behaviors. Even if your policy prohibits the behavior.

This includes seemingly little things like:

- Coming late to meetings
- Not returning emails
- Jokes at the expense of others

And bigger things:

- Not getting work done that others were counting on
- Rude and disrespectful comments

The ACT Now! Model

Move from avoidance to action

Here is the 3-step model:

Acknowledge and Assess

Clarify what you want

Take action

Let's look at each step in more detail

1. Acknowledge and Assess

Acknowledge you are avoiding the conversation or situation.

Assess what that is about for you.

What is in the way of you addressing this?

What are the reasons you tell yourself?

Could you reframe your assessment and have the reasons disappear?

Have you looked at the situation from the other person's point of view? What are you not seeing? What is he/she not seeing that you are seeing?

Consider the following reasons for avoidance mentioned earlier:

Don't know what to do and/or how to do it

Are you avoiding a conversation or situation because you don't know what to do next?

Or you know what to do, but you don't know how to do?

Where can you get support to find out or learn what to do or how to do it?

What is one step you can take to move forward? When you break things down to one next step it is a lot easier than tackling a big issue.

Feels uncomfortable

Can you articulate what is uncomfortable for you?

Can you say why?

Is this pushing one of your 'buttons'? What is the story you are telling yourself about the situation?

Often what we experience as uncomfortable, has **an underlying fear** associated with it.

What are your fears about having the conversation or addressing the situation?

Did you have an experience in the past that this is reminding you of or was similar?

What happened?

How likely is that to happen again?

If you did not like the result, what can you do to change the outcome this time?

What is the worst that could happen?

What is the best thing that could happen?

Are any of these at play:

Do you consider yourself to be too 'nice'?

Do you want to avoid being considered tough?

Concerns about the person's reaction

Are you concerned how he might react if you bring up your issues?

She might leave the company and you need him/her now.

He might become overly emotional, excessively angry or even violent.

Are you concerned and feel compassion because the other person has been dealing with health issues, home issues, etc., therefore you don't want to upset him further?

At times this can be appropriate and other times it is not. Look at whether you are just avoiding a conversation that may be needed regardless of personal situations.

Can you create a space to have the conversation so you can reach an agreement that ideally meets both of your needs?

If needed, bring a third party to the conversation and consult with HR.

2. Clarify what you want

Articulate clearly what you want or need the person to do.

- Are your expectations clear?
- Is this a fixed request or are you open to negotiating?

Do you know what you want?

What questions can you ask to help yourself get clear?

What are your expectations?

Are your expectations clear?

What are your standards?

Have you articulated what you want and by when? Did you confirm that the other person understands the request the same way you do?

If you say you want a report by Monday, is it clear what you expect to be in the report, what the deliverables are, even what time on Monday you want it delivered?

What is an ideal outcome of your conversation?

What is a minimally acceptable outcome?

What could you see if you were in the other person's shoes?

3. Take action

What do you need to do next?

How do you want to communicate?

What is your next step?

Examples:

Contact the person

Set up the time to meet
Ask for help from others

Do it.

Remember - just because we have taken time to plan, does not mean things will turn out the way we want them to. Be prepared that things may not go the way you want to. Remember you will be able to deal with that situation as well.

Use the above questions as a starting point and ask more of your own.

Let me know how this works for you!

About Deborah Naish

Deborah is a business growth consultant and course leader who supports business and nonprofit executives on their journey to be more inspired, courageous, and conscious leaders. She is a strategic thought partner, results accelerator, and change initiator. Her work is based on the premise that personal transformation leads to extraordinary business results.

She brings to her work 30+ years of experience as an executive and then as a consultant at companies and nonprofits, from start-ups to the Fortune 500.

Find out more about Deborah and the programs she offers at www.naishpartners.com
And to explore how she might support you, set up a free strategy consultation.

Or email her at Deborah@naishpartners.com