A Leader’s Guide to Having Difficult Conversations with Others

As a leader there are times when difficult conversations must be had with other leaders or members of an organization. Here are some things to consider:

1. Prepare by reflecting on:
   a. What happened: your side and their side of the story, how did you each contribute?
   b. Understand your emotions

2. Reflect on the purpose of the conversation and decide which issues to raise
   a. Is a conversation the most effective way to resolve the issue? Can you completely let go of the issue otherwise?

3. If you decide that having the conversation is the best way to resolve the issue follow these steps:
   a. Schedule a time to talk to this person and be upfront about the topic of the conversation. Scheduling a time could be very informal such as “Do you have 30 minutes for us to talk about your behavior at yesterday’s event?” Make sure that the person is on board with having the conversation, otherwise it will not go far.
   b. Begin the conversation on fair and equal grounds.
   c. Stick to facts and explain how you are feel using “I” statements. Ask questions to get a better understanding of the situation.
   d. Lead the conversation and actively listen.
   e. Create options that meet the needs of both parties.
   f. Understand that relationships must be mutually beneficial for them to last.
   g. Create a culture of open dialogue and communication moving forward.