

# Sarah Cornally

*Evolving Leaders • Transforming Organisations*

## Courageous Conversations

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Effective leadership requires the skills for having courageous conversations. Being able to speak courageously develops trust and fairness, two critical ingredients for engagement. Leaders who commit to this in themselves and their teams have a clear advantage.

A courageous conversation is a conversation where you take the risk of being completely open and honest, with the intention of creating a better outcome for everyone involved.



It is not a 'difficult' conversation, as that would imply hardship, resistance and struggle. It is not a 'fierce' conversation, as that would imply aggression and generate fear.

A courageous conversation comes from the heart with an honourable intent to be of value to whoever is involved. It relieves hardship, struggle and resistance. It creates clarity, capability and responsibility. It is liberating.

To be really effective you need to develop a desire for finding the truth of a matter. This requires the discipline of focused reflection. It involves peeling back the layers of illusion developed over years of learning how to protect ourselves.

This is where risk comes in: the risk of discovering what really matters to you and committing to that. This is when you begin to communicate on a deeply authentic level, when you can become truly influential. People recognize and respond to authenticity.

Often we just say what is on our mind without thinking about what we really mean to say and how to say it skillfully. Imagine what would happen if we said things in a way that they could be heard with the purity of their intent.

The clearer you get about what you want to say, how you want it to be heard and the result you want to achieve, the more impact you have. When someone hears what you intend and they understand, you experience communion, in its purest sense – a very powerful tool in working together effectively.

In business, if we identify the outcomes we want to create, we can take responsibility for working towards them. For example, John might want to influence his boss, Jane, to consider a proposal. If Jane doesn't consider the proposal, he could blame her for it, or he could choose to take the responsibility and find out how he could better influence her to consider it. From her point of view, there could be confidential budget pressures, or she might be unfamiliar with the concept. If John was willing to change his approach to address these factors, he would be more likely to achieve his desired outcome.

## Try this:

Next time someone does something which offends you, think about what you want to achieve before responding. Think about the purpose your response will serve:

- Will it add value?
- If not, why are you doing it?

If the issue is really important to you, think about how your response could be formed so it can be received by the other person (from their point of view).

- What is your purest intent?
- What do you want them to understand?
- What do you want them to do?
- What will that ask of them?
- How will you communicate it?

To discuss a team or individual coaching intervention, including up-skilling in Courageous Conversations please contact Sarah's EA - Leanne Imbro on [ea@sarahcornally.com](mailto:ea@sarahcornally.com)



**Sarah Cornally** was sought out by C-suite executives to provide consulting services in the area of leadership, culture change and issue resolution as a result of her reputation in resolving complex and challenging issues in the field of Occupational Rehabilitation and Occupational Health & Safety.

For over 30 years she has consulted to and advised leaders in many of the top 100 companies, federal and state organisations in Australia including AMP, Allens, APRA, AstraZeneca, CBA, the Dept of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Coca Cola Amatil, King & Wood Mallesons, KPMG, Macquarie Bank, Microsoft, NSW Department of Human Services, PWC, NAB, Woolworths and multinationals in the Asia Pacific region.

She is best known for her work with executive teams, senior leaders and boards creating the adaptive leadership environment that enables organisations to perform and the people to thrive.

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