



The Conversation Cure

Building Happier, Health Teams



PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH



PREITY BHAGIA

Orthodontic Consultant

20 years of transforming orthodontic practices - over 800% growth

Communication & Culture

Training teams and leaders to build cultures where communication thrives

Efficiency & Systems

Proven frameworks that lead to growth - data driven and efficient systems

**Difficult
conversations can
feel like holding a
hand grenade**



Defining Difficult

Difficult conversations are defined as interactions where the subject matter is

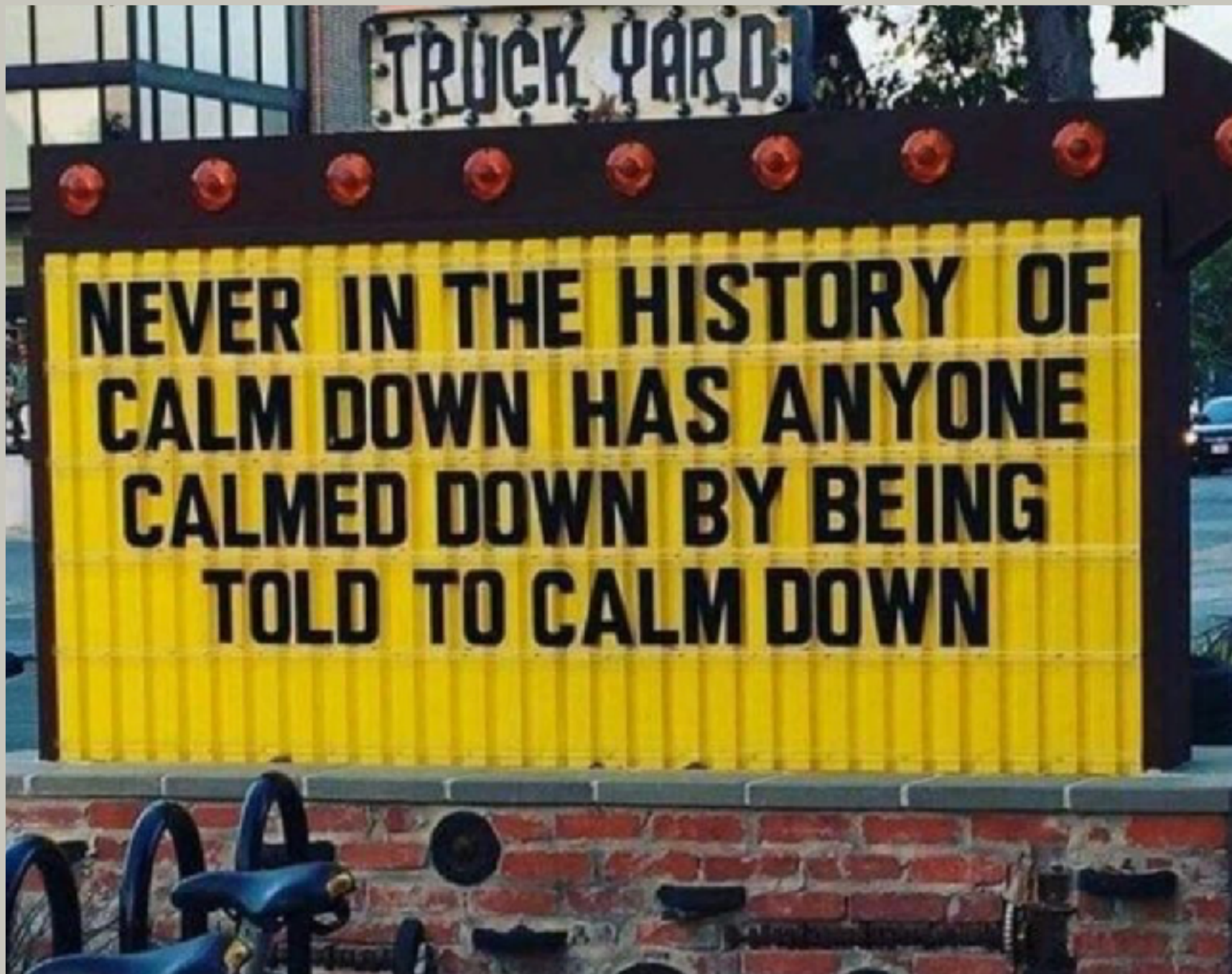
- **Opposing viewpoints**
- **Strong emotions**
- **Significant Consequences**
- **Requires a sensitive approach to manage conflict**

 **Our versions of what is right do not match**

Difficult conversations are everywhere...

- Average of 5.39 stressors per day
- Roughly 85% of employees deal with conflict at work
- Average U.S. worker spends 2 hrs/week dealing with workplace conflict
- 80% of employees avoid having difficult conversations at work

❏ AVOIDANCE is the real problem - What we avoid, compounds



Anatomy of a Conversation

There are 3 conversations happening at once:



What Happened

The facts, the events, the story

Feelings

Emotions underneath the surface

Identity

What this says about me

 Most teams only talk about **what happened**

The Feelings Conversation

Feelings show up whether we name them or not:

Tone



The edge in someone's voice

Gossip



Side conversations that spread

Eye Rolls



Nonverbal signals that sting

Withdrawal



Silence that speaks volumes

 If we don't talk about feelings, they drive the conversation



The Identity Conversation

What does this say about me?

Am I respected?

Do I matter?

Am I good enough?

Two Stories, One Situation

Story A

"She was late"

Story B

**"She was
overwhelmed"**

Same behavior. Two completely different stories.
Both can feel true.

The Story Iceberg

1 We guess intent

2 We fill in the gaps

3 We assume meaning

4 We see behavior

STRUCTURES

PROCEDURES

NORMS

VALUES

HABITS

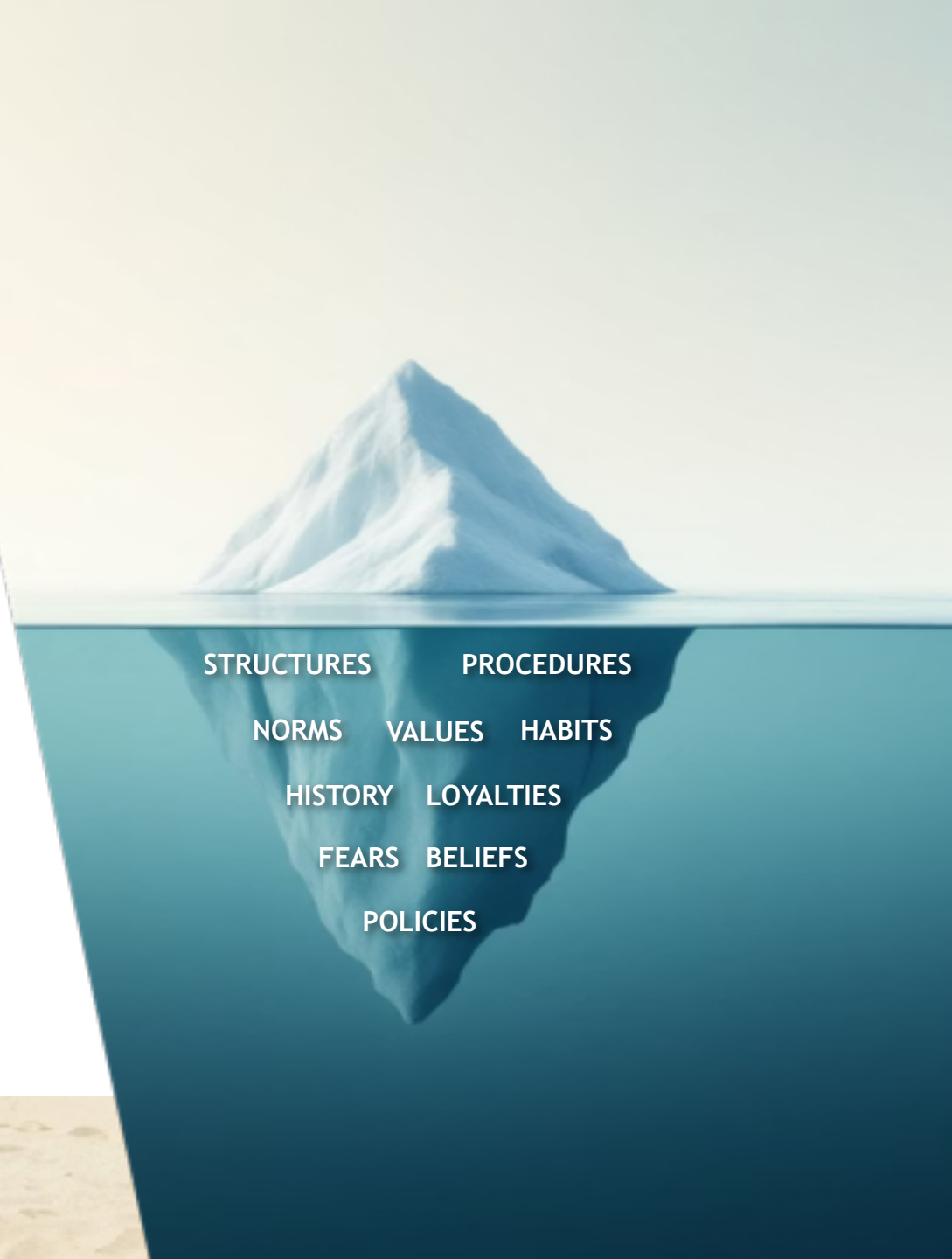
HISTORY

LOYALTIES

FEARS

BELIEFS

POLICIES





This

AND

That

Can both be true...

Curiosity

Move from **CERTAINTY** to **CURIOSITY**

“You are always unprepared”


“Help me understand what is making this difficult...”

 **Curiosity lowers defensiveness**



From **Certainty** to **Curiosity**

- ~~“This kid has definitely not worn rubber bands even once.”~~- Help me understand what’s been getting in the way of wearing your rubber bands.”
- ~~“Here they are again... late as usual.”~~- “I noticed it’s been tough to get here on time—what’s been going on?”
- ~~“The front desk dropped the ball. Again.”~~ - “Can you walk me through what happened on your side with this?”
- ~~“How are you still not ready? We’ve done this all day.”~~- “What’s making it hard to be ready right now?”
- ~~“This parent is so difficult.”~~ - “Can you help me understand what your main concern is today?”
- ~~“No one cares about the schedule but me.”~~ - “Where are we running into challenges with the schedule?”



**“We judge ourselves
by our intentions and
others by their
behavior.”**

- Stephen M.R. Covey

IMPACT VS. INTENTION



I DIDN'T MEAN TO RUN OVER YOUR FOOT...
I'M A GOOD DRIVER!

Impact vs. Intent

Impact

How it landed

Intent

What was meant

Intent does not erase impact.

Recovery begins with focusing on our impact

Blame vs. Contribution

Blame

Judging the past

Contribution

Understanding and **improving**

Creates solutions

 Blame creates defensiveness. Contribution creates solutions.

Speak Without Blame

Instead of:

"You always..."

Try:

- Here's what I noticed
- Here's how I felt
- Here's what I need

Learning Conversations: Understand & be understood. Move forward.

The Conversation Cure Shift

Certainty → Curiosity



Assumptions → Understanding

Blame → Contribution



Reacting → Responding



Common Office Tensions

Front vs. Back Office

Scheduling Stress

Clinical Handoffs

Workload Imbalance

And many more predictable stressors..

Be a First Responder...

The Conflict Playbook

- D - *De-escalate*
- R - *Reset*
- P - *Prevent*

When conflict threatens.....

- In the moment - *De-escalate*
 - Pause. Lower your tone. Slow your pace
 - Acknowledge without agreeing : “I can see this is frustrating”
 - Name the goal “Hey - Same team. Let’s figure this out”
 - Focus on next steps, not fault: “What do we need to do right now”

When conflict threatens.....

- Later that day or next day - *Reset*
 - Address it quickly—don't let it linger
 - Use curiosity, not accusation : “Help me understand what is going on here”
 - Separate facts from story
 - Re-anchor on shared goal: “How do we handle this better next time?”

When conflict threatens.....

- In the weeks that follow - *Prevent*
 - Identify patterns: “Why does this keep happening?”
 - Build systems : Clear policies, Communication scripts
 - Practice ahead of time (role play common scenarios)
 - Reinforce when it goes well: “That is exactly how we handle it”



Don't win the argument.

Solve the Problem!

Why This Builds Trust

People Feel Heard

Being truly listened to changes everything



Emotions Are Respected

Feelings are acknowledged, not dismissed

Problems Get Solved Earlier

Issues don't fester when addressed with care



 Trust improves teamwork and patient experience



Conversations Create Culture

What we avoid
grows

Silence doesn't protect
– it compounds

What we address
heals

Naming it is the first step
to resolving it

What we appreciate
multiplies

Gratitude is contagious
– spread it generously

DAILY PRACTICE

Everyday Habits



Check Assumptions



Speak Early



Appreciate Often



Repair Quickly

TEAM AGREEMENTS

How We Work Together



Talk **to** each other, not **about** each other




Assume positive intent



Address, don't avoid

The Real Cure

Not scripts. Not perfection.

 Curiosity

 Courage

 Compassion

 Consistency



PREITY BHAGIA

EXCEL

Orthodontic Consulting

Insights . Strategies . Solutions

Great teams are not those without conflict
But those who know how to handle it

Connect with me



Preity@ExcelOC.com



832-618-0652

www.ExcelOrthoConsulting.com