

UBC is focused on creating a vibrant, healthy and welcoming environment for all. It's a place where bold thinking and continuous learning happens every day.

Effective dialogue is at the heart of a learning organization. It is as much a mindset as it is a practice. Conversations are the key to moving important work, ideas, and people practices forward.

UBC's Department of Organizational Development and Learning is pleased to introduce the COEC Conversation Model, a simple framework developed and tested in partnership with Coaching Services and Extended Learning. At the heart of the framework is a desire to make our conversations really matter, in a productive and mutually beneficial way, to strengthen our relationships and enable the conditions where people can be open, honest, and encouraged to bring their best ideas forward.

The COEC Model is comprised of 4 elements: Connect, Open, Explore and Close. Together, like a compass, they allow us to navigate a variety of conversations, while maintaining a commitment to be purposeful, respectful, curious and creative, together.

Let's take a closer look:

Connect:

The more connected we are with one another, the more effective and meaningful our workplace will be. Connection matters - it cultivates psychological safety and mutual wellbeing, allowing us to build and sustain meaningful working relationship.

When we show genuine interest, care and respect, we create the conditions where people can bring their full selves forward.

To Connect, we hold others in the same positive regard as we wish to be held. We recognize how our positions might impact others. Are you a peer? A manager? How might you need to adjust your stance or style in order to put others at ease? We check in – we ask people how they are doing and managing. We focus on creating a safe and welcoming environment for everyone to share freely.

Open

Creating a shared understanding of why we are having the conversation helps move our work forward. When we Open, we confirm or establish the purpose and affirm the objectives and desired outcomes for all involved.

Since we have taken the time to connect, everyone can more freely take responsibility for cocreating the conversation's direction. We can ask clarifying questions, state expectations and adjust the agenda in order to reach agreement on what can realistically be accomplished during the discussion, and what might need to be deferred to a later date.

To Open, we ask "What is most important?", "What do we hope to achieve today?" We commit to dialogue and inquiry.

Explore

With connection and clear purpose established, the true adventure in collaborative dialogue can begin. Explore reminds us to be curious with each other and with ourselves. To listen deeply, share perspectives, surface ideas, and challenge assumptions. Explore lets us learn more about each other, what matters and motivates, what we value and care about, and encourages us to strive for the very best outcomes possible.

To explore, we activate our genuine interest in others, their views, expertise, and experiences; we ask open-ended questions, probe to learn more and encourage divergent thinking. It is here that we might ask, what else is possible? or what are we missing? We appreciate what we hear and summarize what will move forward.

Close

Close is where we bring it all together. It's where we confirm insights, actions and commitments, ensuring our expectations were met.

To Close, we revisit the initial focus, plan next steps and future meetings, share key take-aways and identify the required resources to move forward. Finally, we want to be sure to reinforce the genuine care and respect that we established together when we first **Connected**.

We recognize that not all conversations end with actionable outcomes. We may spend time on just one element of the model, like Connect, and if the topic is particularly difficult or complex, it is likely that we will need many conversations over a longer period of time. And yet in each encounter, virtual or in-person, we can find our anchor by using the COEC Model as our navigation tool.

We hope you find the model to be flexible and adaptable to your work context and relationships- from planning to problem solving and from brainstorming to performance development, this model is designed to help you have better conversations, each and every day.

We invite you to explore the supporting resources and reflect on how you can integrate this into your daily ways of working.