

Reframing is a muscle. It develops through offline practice first — translating destructive statements on paper — before it can happen in real time. Work through these exercises in order. The early ones are writing exercises. The later ones bring the skill into live conversation.

EXERCISE 1 — The Translation Practice

Skill: Converting blame and positions into interests and needs

Time: 15 minutes · Frequency: Three times this week

What to do

Take each statement below and rewrite it as a forward-looking interest statement. Remove the blame. Find the need underneath.

1. 'You never include me in decisions that affect my work.'
2. 'They always change the plan at the last minute — it's completely disrespectful.'
3. 'Nobody in this organization cares about quality anymore.'
4. 'You're either with us or against us.'
5. 'There's no point raising issues here — nothing ever changes.'

Reflection questions

- What pattern do you notice in where the needs are hiding?
- Which statements were hardest to reframe and why?
- Which reframes felt honest and which felt like you were softening something that shouldn't be softened?

EXERCISE 2 — The Real Conversation Log

Skill: Applying reframing to your own recent conflicts

Time: 20 minutes · Frequency: Once this week

What to do

Think of a recent conflict or tense conversation. Write down three things that were said — by either party — that escalated rather than helped.

For each one, write the reframe: what was the need underneath that statement? How could it have been expressed in a way that opened rather than closed the conversation?

Then write what you would say differently if you had that moment again.

Reflection questions

- Which statements were yours and which were the other person's?
- What need were you expressing in the moments you escalated?
- What would have been different if either party had offered a reframe in the moment?

EXERCISE 3 — The Live Reframe

Skill: Reframing in real time during a conversation

Time: Any tense conversation · Frequency: As opportunities arise

What to do

In your next tense conversation, when you hear a statement that is blaming, absolute, or positional — pause before responding.

Ask yourself silently: what does this person actually need? Then offer a reframe out loud, as a question: 'It sounds like what really matters to you here is... Is that right?'

Check the reframe with the person. If it's wrong, ask them to help you understand what they meant.

Reflection questions

- How did the person respond to being reframed?
- Did you feel the reframe was accurate or did you miss something?
- What was the impact on the energy of the conversation?

EXERCISE 4 — The Self-Reframe

Skill: Reframing your own statements before you speak

Time: Before any difficult conversation · Frequency: Weekly

What to do

Before a difficult conversation, write down what you are tempted to say — the version that is blaming, absolute, or positional.

Then reframe it. What is the need underneath what you want to say? How can you express that need clearly, honestly, and without blame?

Enter the conversation with the reframed version. Notice what is different.

Reflection questions

- How different was the reframed version from what you originally wanted to say?
- Did expressing the need rather than the blame change how the other person responded?
- What does this exercise reveal about your own conflict patterns?

For coaching support on reframing practice, contact diazprin@conflictmanagementspace.com