“Courage is being scared to death – but saddling up anyway.” ~ John Wayne
The cumulative effect of the ongoing conversations that we have with those around us, dramatically affect the results we get. Many organizations have ineffective, surface-level, conversations that get in the way of achievement because they inhibit accountability. They don’t address underlying performance issues.

Courageous Conversations peel away the surface layers of our typical conversations, and enable us to create more accountability through discussion of what is really happening and exploration of what to do as a result. Courageous Conversations is a structured way to foster growth and enhance results in individuals and organizations through direct exploration and communication of perceived truth. Courageous Conversations can be an effective building block for the successful application of Periodization and for strategic implementation. They transform our current conversations into insightful dialog that fosters a culture and a bias for action.

There are two types of Courageous Conversations; organizational and individual. In this first segment we will work to clarify and plan an individual issue. In the second segment we will work together to develop an organization issue for discussion, gain action-based feedback on the issue, and commit to actions to resolve it.

For many conflict is something to be avoided and is associated with negative outcomes and overall unpleasantness. Even for those of us who feel comfortable with conflict there are probably areas that we are avoiding and have not effectively engaged. As you are aware, our results are ultimately created by our thinking. How we deal with issues is no different - often our thinking gets in the way.

To get started exploring how our thinking operates in this area, identify a few issues on the next page that remain unresolved. Identify issues with others both at home and at work:
What are some of the fears that may deter us from confronting these issues, and confronting in general:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

What are the results of not confronting problems and issues:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

The very outcomes we fear if we confront someone are virtually guaranteed if we don’t. The good news is that confrontation doesn’t have to be anger-filled and unpleasant. In fact, just the opposite can be true. Having the courage to discuss the issues will actually result in increased confidence, better relationships, deeper intimacy and peace. Effective confrontation is not combative, but rather is simply a search for the truth. At the heart of Courageous Conversations is a willingness to openly discuss critical issues with a focus on resolution. With experience these conversations allow both parties an opportunity to explore, discuss and grow. As a result, issues get resolved and relationships strengthen.
CHARACTERISTICS OF COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

> **Intentional** – Stay focused on the message and the core issue and don’t be sidetracked by emotional triggers or another’s unwillingness to face the issue.

> **Seek Truth** – These conversations are learning experiences where both parties understand more about each other’s perspectives and the underlying truth of the situation.

> **Acknowledge Personal Contribution** – Recognize your accountability in the current situation. This reduces the others’ defensiveness and role models humility and openness.

> **Question Based** – Use questions to help discover individual perspectives and facilitate growth and learning.

> **Build Relationship** – By working through difficult issues, relationships are reconciled and strengthened.

> **Resolution Focused** – Ultimately Courageous Conversations are not about making others wrong or highlighting failures but are concerned with resolution and moving forward.

THE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS MODEL

1. name the issue w/example
2. identify your contribution to the issue
3. what’s at stake
4. describe your emotions
5. voice your desire to resolve the issue
6. inquire into partner’s views/perception
7. identify resolution
8. agree on actions
COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS OPENING STATEMENT

Name the issue w/example:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Identify your contribution to the issue:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What’s at stake:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Describe your emotions:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Organizations are dynamic and ever-changing and within this environment issues arise that for one reason or another we avoided confronting. Often these issues are avoided because they require interpersonal conflict to resolve. Left unresolved these issues will negatively impact performance. Unresolved conflict can have long lasting detrimental effects including: increased turnover, reduced team work, declining morale, and poor performance.

In this exercise you will identify and prepare an issue for group discussion and feedback. This process will provide you with feedback from your peers and can be replicated with your team. Below is a model we will use to prepare an issue for discussion.

### THE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS MODEL

1. name the issue w/example
2. identify your contribution to the issue
3. what’s at stake
4. describe your emotions
5. voice your desire to resolve the issue
6. inquire into partner’s views/perception
7. identify resolution
8. agree on actions
ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

(continued)

CHARACTERISTICS OF COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

> **THE ISSUE IS:** Concise description (one to two sentences) of the problem. Is it a concern, challenge, opportunity, or recurring problem that is becoming more troublesome?

> **IT IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE:** What’s at stake?

> **MY IDEAL OUTCOME IS:** What specific results do I want?

> **RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Define the who, what, why, where & when of the issue. Who are the key players? Which forces are at work? What is the issues current status?

> **WHAT HAVE I DONE UP TO THIS POINT:** What actions have I taken so far? What options am I considering?

> **THE HELP I WANT FROM THE GROUP IS:** What results do I want from my group?