

COACHING WITH THE EXPERIENCE CUBE

Many Leaders have learned how to use the experience cube to manage feedback conversations with employees. Using the four elements of the experience cube - *Observations, Thoughts, Feelings* and *Wants* - to structure your message helps remove blame and minimize defensiveness.

You can also use the experience cube to coach others through a difficult situation. The four quadrants of the cube remain the same, but instead of thinking through your own experience, you ask questions to help the employee get clear on their experience. This can include clarification of what actually happened, separating out the story they are making up to fill in the gaps, the impact that story is having on their emotional state, and what they truly want as an outcome from the situation.

If you are not familiar with the cube, practice for yourself using the [experience cube worksheet](#) so you are familiar with the process or take any of UVic's communications courses in the employee learning calendar.

<p style="text-align: center;">OBSERVATIONS</p> <p>Sensory data (information you take in through your senses), primarily sight and sound. What a video camera would record.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THOUGHTS</p> <p>The meaning you add to your observations (i.e., the way you make sense of the data, including beliefs, expectations, assumptions, judgements, values and principles).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WANTS</p> <p>Clear description of the outcomes you seek. What you hope to achieve, your intentions for the future.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FEELINGS</p> <p>Your emotional or physiological response. Feeling words such as happy, sad, mad, glad, scared, or a description of what is happening in your body.</p>

Use the coaching questions below to help the employee to gain more clarity around the situation, the impact of their own interpretations, and what they want. Feel free to craft any other questions that come to mind. It is important to share the tool with the employee and confirm they want to be coached. You might need to just listen for a bit to vent the emotion and then simply ask "Do you mind if I ask you some questions so we can work through this together?"

COACHING WITH THE EXPERIENCE CUBE

<p style="text-align: center;">OBSERVATIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Just the objective facts</i></p> <p>What happened? And then what? What else? What did you see? What words did they use? What words did you use? How/where were they sitting/standing? What was the volume of their voice? What else did you notice? And what else? How can you describe the situation in a way that is so neutral that they would agree?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THOUGHTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>How you interpret the facts</i></p> <p>What gaps are there in your observations? What story are you making up to fill in the gaps? What facts are inconsistent with your story? What 10% of the facts do you already agree on? What might be a more curious interpretation? What does being right about your story get you? What's the real issue for you? And what else? What is at stake for you in this?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WANTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What is your objective?</i></p> <p>What do you want? What would be a higher level want? What is a common want in this situation? What do you want for the relationship? Why is it important to resolve this? What is possible without this between you? What don't you want? Can you flip it to a want? What's the first step towards that want?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FEELINGS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The emotional impact of your interpretation</i></p> <p>What feelings are surfacing right now? Name the feeling: Sad/mad/happy/hurt/scared? Name the intensity of that feeling then/now. What sensation do you feel in your body? What are you afraid might happen? What does your heart/gut tell you? What do these feelings remind you of? When have you felt this way before?</p>

Note any other questions you might ask in each quadrant.

Once you have coached the employee to help them better understand their experience, use the [experience cube worksheet](#) to help them plan their conversation with the other person. Ask them what support they need and clarify when they will have the conversation. Follow up to see how it went and determine next steps if needed.