

Conversations for Kindness

**The role of kindness and compassion in conflict and
challenging conversations**

July 2024

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About the movement

Conversations for Kindness is a monthly virtual meeting that was set up in the summer of 2020 by eight colleagues and friends working in healthcare across Sweden, the UK and the USA: Bob Klaber, Dominique Allwood, Maureen Bisognano, Goran Henriks, Suzie Bailey, Anette Nilsson, Gabby Matthews and James Mountford. The purpose of the meeting was to have some time together to continue some initial conversations around kindness, and its role at the 'business end' of healthcare, and to plan interactive workshops on this topic.

Conversations for Kindness

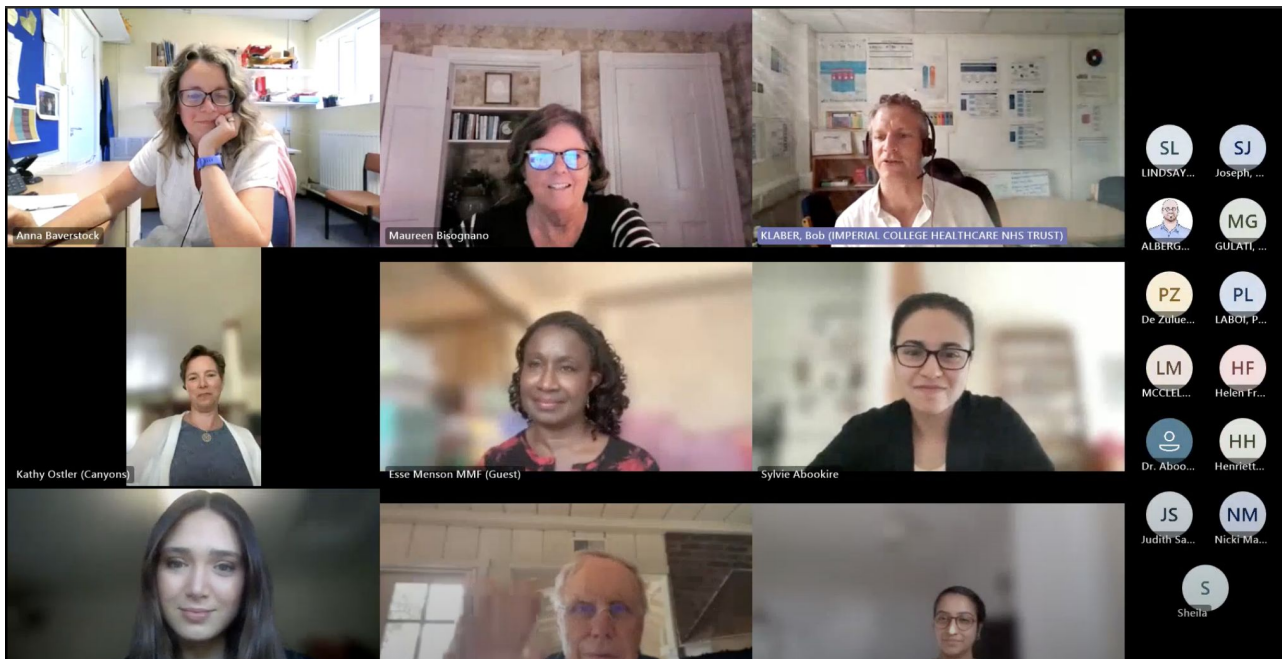
- Monthly Zoom call on the third Thursday of every month (6-7pm UK time)
- A focus on listening, learning, thinking differently and mobilising for action
- An open culture of sharing of resources, energy and ideas

If you would like to join the conversation for kindness, please complete this **[contact form](#)**

Joining the Conversation from across the world

More than **40** Kindness in Healthcare community members came together from all over the world for this Conversation for Kindness. Once again, we had new faces join us for the first time!

Where were our participants?



Ghana



North Tees, England



Massachusetts, USA

Who did we hear from?

Our speakers today were Anna Baverstock and Esse Menson.

Anna is a paediatrician who looks after children and their families with complex Neurodisability, ASD, ADHD and palliative care needs. Alongside this she is the Associate Medical Director for senior doctor wellbeing and leadership.



Esse Menson was a consultant in paediatric infectious diseases, immunology and HIV in London before being lured away by a fascination for the human skills that are essential for the effective delivery of excellent healthcare.

This insights pack summarises the session, but you can also [watch the event on YouTube](#)

What did we hear? Insights from Anna and Esse

Anna and Esse kicked off by discussing the importance of engaging with kindness and empathy: listening, understanding, and believing the other person even when it doesn't match up to our own experiences or we disagree.

They outlined the difference between **empathy** and **compassion** is that empathy involves **engaging with a broad spectrum of emotions of another**: joy, happiness, sadness, and compassion... **compassion involves engaging with others in their suffering**.

When we are in conflict, emotions, memories and past painful experiences dominate how we communicate, and this impacts our ability to communicate at our best.



What did we hear? Insights from Anna and Esse

Assumptions make it difficult for us to hear – we can assume negative intent of another if we are in discord – which impacts on the information that we take in and try to understand.

Listening in conflict is like a dance – when we engage with kindness, we can try to find each other's steps again.

Barriers to listening

Prejudices and biases

Previous experiences

Emotional reactions

Assumptions and stereotyping

Mental distractions

Selective listening

Defensiveness

Cognitive overload

Lack of interest / motivation

Ego and self-absorption

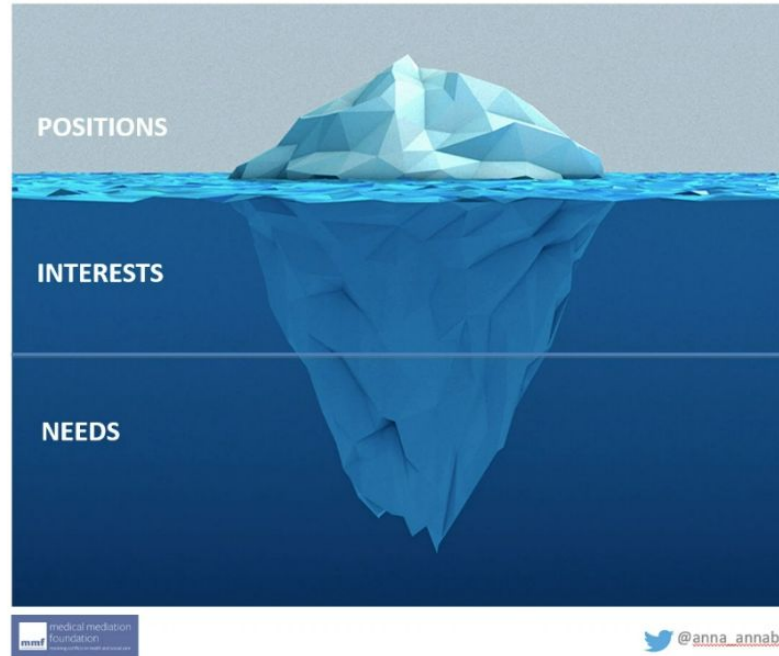


 [@anna_annabav](https://twitter.com/anna_annabav)

What did we hear? The PIN Model

The PIN Model

The PIN Model is a framework for addressing and understanding issues that exist when we are having difficult conversations or are in conflict with somebody.



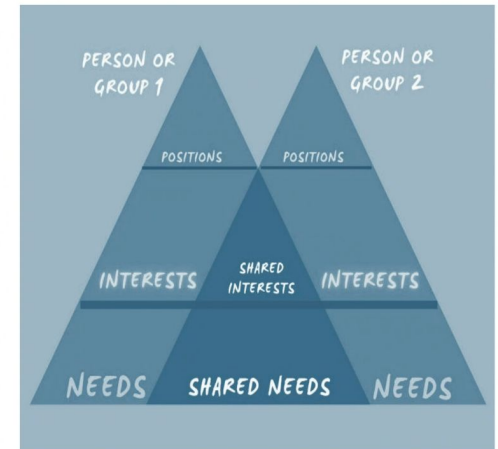
“Every behaviour, no matter how awful, is the tragic expression of an unmet need” – Marshall Rosenberg

Group discussion

A clinical scenario was presented about a young child diagnosed with leukaemia and a conflict between the parent and the paediatric oncologist related to the proposed treatment plan (alternative therapies vs chemotherapy).

Members were asked to:

- 1) Explore with kindness the interests and needs that may be under the surface for each person
- 2) Can you identify any common interests or needs?
- 3) What might the doctor do to move things forward with kindness?



Group discussion

Maureen

Maureen had torn feelings as she had empathy for both. She felt the father's primary interest was for her daughter's experience today, in the present.

Gerke

Gerke thought the order in which people expressed their feelings first influenced how she thought about the situation. They both came wanting the best, but on the surface, they are quite different; we need to look deeper below the surface.

Nicki

Nicki shared her family's story of being 'that family' needing to communicate with multiple care team members at once and not always being able to find that middle space in our communication with the team; how frustrating it is and disempowering when you feel that there is not being effort made to meet in the middle.

Lisa

Lisa felt the Doctor showed a bit of unkindness, indicating that they wanted the best for the girl, insinuating perhaps that the father wasn't keeping that in mind.

Whole group discussion

Judith talked about how the language of the clinician was not appropriate to support the parents in informing their decisions.

“We discussed how we could arrive at co-creating the path forward given that both wanted the best for the child” -
Dina

Judith talked about how the language of the clinician was not appropriate to support the parents in informing their decisions.

“We talked about what can be shared. What cannot be shared is the potential loss, real and present of the loved one. There are no words that can reassure the parent or carer in the conversation we discussed. - Paul

Going forward

Practice preparing yourself for 60 seconds before going into a challenging situation or ahead of a difficult conversation. Do some deep breathing, and be prepared to listen and to understand the other person. You don't have to agree or share the same perspective, to understand and recognise someone else's viewpoint. If you are not getting anywhere in a conflict, suggest taking a short break and stepping out, regrouping and then trying again.

Kindness – Empathy

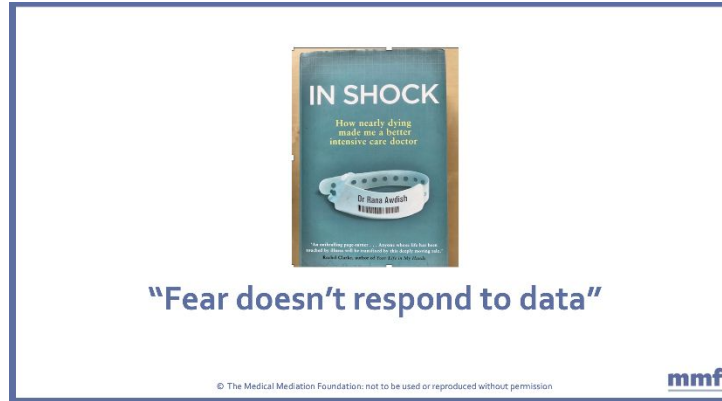


'Rather than walking in your shoes, I need to learn how to listen to the story you tell about what it's like in your shoes *and* believe you even when it doesn't match my experiences.'

Brené Brown

Closing reflections

Listening is a
therapeutic
intervention, in
and of itself –
Esse.



Listen your way
out of conflict
rather than talk
your way into
conflict – Anna.

Acknowledgements

This insights pack has been co-produced by
Nicki Macklin and the team at **Kaleidoscope Health and Care**

For all enquiries please contact us [via the Kindness in Healthcare website](#) or email
bob.klaber@nhs.net

See you next month for another great Conversation.

[Check out resources from our previous sessions on our website](#)

Thank you for joining, thank you for reading.

We'll see you next month!