

The Deadly Ds

KinetEQ Coaching & Consulting
www.kinetEQcoach.com

Communication Killers

We've all been there. A conversation that suddenly takes a deadly turn: getting uncomfortable & feeling like a personal attack. Instead of listening & connecting, someone switches on survival mode. This reaction might protect them in the moment, but it drains the energy from the exchange & results in diminished trust, stalled progress, & a relationship gone cold!

The Deadly D's are a way to understand what happens in these moments & how to bring the life back into the conversation.



Deny
reject truths



Discount
reject value



Debate
compete for truth



Defend
protect self-image



Dismiss
reject feelings



Disappear
withdraw



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Why this matters

Communication is the pulse of every strong relationship, whether professional or personal. It's important to be mindful of your feelings, thoughts, behaviors, & ultimate impact during conversations; otherwise known as self-awareness! This awareness of yourself, paired with awareness of others, gives you the ability to recognize when conversations take a deadly turn, building resentment, broken trust, and failures.

If you can recognize these common Deadly Ds, you can act fast to revive conversations (& relationships) heading for an early grave.



Who it's for

- Anyone breathing!



How to use

Think of this guide as a proactive rescue kit for tough conversations. Before potentially challenging meetings or when you need to provide critical feedback, review this package to help keep the conversation from turning cold. The more you practice spotting the Deadly Ds & recognizing when you're having a Deadly D moment, the easier it is to restart the pulse & keep the dialogue alive.





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| Definition | <i>Reject truth.</i> Pretending the issue doesn't exist or rejecting someone's feelings or perspective on the situation |
| Why it's harmful | It kills honesty & trust; it invalidates the other person |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: resistant, in disbelief, self-righteous</p> <p>You/They could have: crossed arms, shaking head, stiff posture, no eye contact</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There's no way!" • "Let's agree to disagree" • "I don't see how that's an issue" • "That absolutely didn't happen" |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause & acknowledge the discomfort • Suspend your disbelief & fully see the other perspective • Ask clarifying questions to learn more • Remind yourself that multiple viewpoints can coexist • Replace denial with curiosity |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the tone calm & curious • Restate what they denied in neutral terms to check for understanding • Share that it can feel hard to accept or see another perspective • Gently provide specific facts • Gently remind them that sometimes multiple views can coexist • Ask them questions to further understand their perspective |





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| Definition | <i>Compete for truth.</i> Turning the conversation into a battle of who is right vs. wrong |
| Why it's harmful | It drains the life from a conversation by creating a power dynamic of win/lose, rather than collaborating, learning, or listening to understand |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: competitive, heated, aggressive</p> <p>You/They could have: raised voice, leaning forward, finger pointing, hands in fists, crossed arms</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "But that's not the point! The point is..." • "You're wrong" • "Actually, what really happened was..." |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathe before respond to "prove" yourself • Ask yourself what matters most • Shift focus from winning to exploring & learning • Use questions instead of counterpoints • Slow down the pace & back-&-forth quips • Don't interrupt |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge their points without conceding • Ask them, "What's most important for us to solve together?" • Invite collaboration & teamwork instead of competition • Calmly ask to finish if you're interrupted, & provide the same to them |





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| Definition | <i>Reject feelings.</i> Brushing off feelings, ideas, concerns, or perspectives of another as though they are unimportant |
| Why it's harmful | It makes people feel like a ghost - unseen & unheard; unvalued |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: impatient, superior, uninterested, checked-out</p> <p>You/They could have: eye rolling, sighing, yawning, focus on phone or computer, no eye contact, shrug, dismissive hand wave</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You're overreacting" • "It's really not that big of a deal" • "You're too emotional about this" • "It's nothing" • or ignoring someone with silence or redirecting the conversation |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice when you want to minimize another's concern • Replace dismissive words with validating ones • Pause & challenge yourself to fully listen • Try to pinpoint the reason why you feel dismissive; you may uncover something important that you missed! |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge their viewpoint & feelings • Say, "I can see this is important to you" • State that you want to share an idea & you'd appreciate them listening • Ask follow-up questions |





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| Definition | <i>Reject value.</i> Undervaluing someone's input, effort, or perspective; often with judgement |
| Why it's harmful | It makes people stop offering ideas or effort, cutting off the oxygen to collaboration & the relationship |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: annoyed, judgemental, patronizing</p> <p>You/They could have: shrugged shoulders, shaking head, raised eyebrows, smirk</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I could have done that better" • "And what value does that add?" • "It's not that impressive" • "I guess I expected more" |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice when you're minimizing someone's contribution • Use phrases like, "I appreciate your effort/perspective/work" • Find at least one positive thing about what another contributed • Say, "I may have brushed past this too quickly; let's slow down & give it more time" |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause & make eye contact, showing you're fully present • Use a steady tone, not louder, but clearly firm • Say, "Can we pause and come revisit what I just shared?" • Say, "I may not have explained clearly. This is important, so let me try again" |





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| Definition | <i>Project self-image.</i> Protecting yourself at all cost, instead of hearing feedback or criticism; this can be about yourself, values, opinions, work, or even those you care about |
| Why it's harmful | It builds walls instead of bridges. Conversations get stuck in self-protection & a "me vs. them" perspective, instead of collaboration & teamwork |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: attacked, anxious, cornered, protective, an urge to justify</p> <p>You/They could have: raised voice, leaning forward, hands up or arms crossed, rigid posture</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You just don't understand what I was doing" • "I was just trying to help" • "That wasn't my fault" • "Why are you attacking me?" |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice your urge to explain or justify • Breathe before responding to "prove" yourself • Shift focus from winning to exploring & learning • Use questions instead of defending your ideas or actions • Remind yourself this is about growth & better outcomes, not an attack |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow the pace down & even speak quieter to bring calmness • Reinforce that you're not questioning intent, but want to learn • Say, "I appreciate your perspective. I'd like to add..." • Remind them that you respect them & want to find a shared solution |





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| Definition | <i>Withdraw.</i> Removing oneself physically or emotionally from the exchange |
| Why it's harmful | It pulls the plug & leaves the conversation lifeless, the issue unresolved, & the people disconnected |
| How to spot it in yourself & others | <p>You could feel: overwhelmed, anxious, hopeless, scared, checked-out</p> <p>You/They could have: silence, backing away, slumping, no eye contact, focus on phone or computer</p> <p>You/They could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I don't want to talk about this anymore" • "I have nothing else to say" • "Whatever" • or just be silent |
| What to do for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & name how you feel; share it if you're comfortable • Practice staying present in the moment • Ask for a pause, but commit to a time to continue the conversation • Use grounding techniques, like breath-work or body-awareness |
| What to do for others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently acknowledge, "I notice you've gone quiet; did I upset you?" • Reassure safety & patience • Reassure that they are an important part of the solution or team • Offer a follow-up meeting so they feel confident preparing in advance |

