Hi everyone and welcome to the March Life-Changing Leadership Blast! Today I want to discuss a couple of points around communicating during conflict in the workplace or communicating when there's a sense of hostility in the workplace.

The first thing I want to discuss is simply that when we have strong emotions, those tend to be communicated through our body language and our tone and often times this is unconscious; we are very unaware how much our body language or our tone changes when we are experiencing strong emotions, especially strong negative emotions. With those strong, particularly negative emotions, we also have increased internal dialogue and that internal dialogue tends to have more assumptions and strong judgments attached or present in those conversations. So what we want to do is look at our emotions and use them as a compass for how we might want to move forward, what kinds of conversations we want to have and so that's really number one is using our emotions consciously or being aware of those emotions.

The next thing I want to articulate is embracing humility. This is really important from the standpoint of just recognizing that we are all human beings, we are all capable of making mistakes and potentially making selfish choices or decisions. This again isn’t always conscious, we are sometimes not aware of how our decisions are perceived by other people so just really embracing humility and really looking at people as human beings and not as some kind of perfect archetype or some kind of mind reader or someone who should know exactly how their decisions impact you. So again when we just embrace a bit of that humility, it can go a very long way for our desire to engage with people.

The next thing I want to articulate is the ability to slow down, take some deep breaths, especially in conflict or in times of hostility. When we slow down and take deep breaths, we honour ourselves, we honour our emotions and we also honour the people around us because less assumptions can be made when we simply slow down. And again there's lots of research being put into how our brains and how our bodies function differently when we take the time to slow down. So that's really going to be the third important point that I want to articulate.

The fourth thing is this ability to seek to understand. This really requires us to be curious so again we want to seek to understand. So sometimes a decision will get made, it will be very quick to judge or make some assumptions around why it was made. So what we want to do is in those moments, we want to seek to understand. In those instances where we do that successfully, what I would then articulate is especially if it impacted you negatively to, if it is safe, ask for permission and to ask for permission to share with someone how it felt for you or how it made you feel valued. It could be something as simple as, “is it okay with you if I share how that decision impacted me” or “can I tell you what that was like from my perspective” or “can I tell you my overall perception of that or how that influenced me or how that impacted my team.” If we take this more cautious, more empathetic approach to understanding why something was done, why something was said, why a decision was made in a particular way, we can often be surprised that there is a rational, logical reason for why this decision was made and we can often find out that it's not always personal; it’s not necessarily against us.

So I just want to highlight these four things again: to use our emotions as a bit of a compass / to honour those emotions, we want to embrace humility because again we're all capable of making mistakes or making selfish decisions. The third part is to really slow down, take some deep breaths, honour yourself, honour those emotions and then step four is to seek to understand, be very curious and where it is safe, ask for permission to just share how that impacted you and your role. So again I recognize that discussing conflict, discussing our emotions is something where we don't necessarily embrace it, it's certainly not encouraged in our North American culture and having those very honest and difficult conversations can be quite challenging and so I hope that these four considerations can help you when approaching conflict in the workplace.

Thanks so much for your time and I hope you have a great month!