

Toastmasters Advanced Aurators Club  
Thursday, 17 September 2020

# Difficult Questions

Tools from the trenches of real life

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# Morgane Oger



- IT Manager at Best Buy Canada - 25 years as a software consultant.
- Ran for public office twice
- Public policy advocacy wins
- Human rights activist
- 25 years corporate, nonprofit political leadership

- Founder - Morgane Oger Foundation
- IT Manager at Best Buy Canada
- Ran for office provincially, municipally
- Municipal, provincial, federal policy wins
- Won a major human rights case

# Agenda

## **The Mind and Body**

- Prepare And Practice
- Fear
- Amygdala
- Take back control

## **The Tools**

- The Core Message
- The Message Box
- The Johari window
- The Pivot

## **The Use Cases**

- The Job interview
- The Press Interview
- The Q&A Session
- The news conference
- The elevator pitch

# Difficult Questions

## 1. The Mind and the Brain

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# Prepare And Practice.



- Why you are doing this?
- What are you looking for?
- What is your audience looking for?
- Do you have what you need?
- What questions do you expect?
- What are your answers?
- What is the feel of the room?

# Fear



You are speaking at an **important** event. It's really, really important to you.

The room looks **really big**. Looking around, you can't see **one free seat**.

You worked towards this for **six months**. This is a **really, really important day**.

You can't make a mistake tonight.

You have a misstep. You spill something, you drop your notes, you repeat yourself.

Somebody asks you a question that's too close to home.

You feel a jolt. You feel your heart rate jump.

Your palms become sweaty. Your focus sharpens. The back of your neck is tingling.

You freeze. Or... you blurt something out without thinking.

Now, you've just made the situation worse.

**This is your personal nightmare playing out but you are wide awake.**

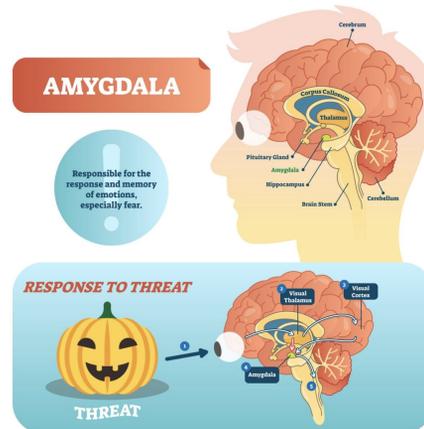
**I'd like you to meet your**

# A·myg·da·la

/əˈmɪɡdələ/

*noun* ANATOMY

1. roughly almond-shaped mass of gray matter inside each cerebral hemisphere, involved with the experiencing of emotions. - Google



<https://blog.cognifit.com/amygdala-2/>

<https://youtu.be/JVvMSwsOXPw?t=66>

**The amygdala is part of the** limbic system. The lizard brain.

**Prefrontal Cortex** – the prefrontal cortex uses important information to focus, decide, compute, analyze, and **reason** –it is our thinking part of the brain and helps us to make good decisions! Here's the catch: it only receives information when the amygdala is calm.

**Amygdala** – Have you ever felt like you want run, freeze or fight? That was the amygdala. The amygdala is programmed to keep you safe at all costs! It regulates and blocks information from going to your prefrontal cortex so you can react in an instant. The challenge is it can't tell a stressful situation from a true emergency and it can cause you to react without thinking.

**Hippocampus** – What are your favourite memories? The most useful facts you know? The hippocampus creates, stores, and process all important facts and memories the prefrontal cortex passes on to it. It is like a library system for the brain.



# Take Back Control

**Re-activate** your frontal lobe

**Waiting**

**Breathing** Left-Right/ Nose-Mouth

**Visualizing** a happy or pleasant memory.

Something you see

Something you smelled

Something you heard



<https://youtu.be/JVvMSwsOXPw?t=66>

Early humans were exposed to the constant threat of being killed or injured by wild animals or other tribes. To improve the chances of survival, the fight- or-flight response evolved. It's an automatic response to physical danger that allows you to react quickly without thinking.

When you feel threatened and afraid, the amygdala automatically activates the fight-or-flight response by sending out signals to release stress hormones that prepare your body to fight or run away.

This response is triggered by emotions like fear, anxiety, aggression, and anger.

# Difficult Questions

## 1. The tools to control the conversation

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# The Core Message

- You are perfect for the job.
- You have an idea and need funding
- The project is on schedule
- People need to take a stand.
- 1 motivation
- 1 justification
- 1 ask
- 1 justification

People are dying of drug overdoses

They are being poisoned by a poisoned drug supply

British Columbia needs to create a safe drug supply

This will save lives as our province stands up addiction counseling services.

# The Message Box

The Message Box

1. Incredibly loyal.
2. Infectious attitude
3. Good at cuddles.
4. Make you active
5. Poop outside
6. Love you back.

1. Cat litter smell
2. Toxoplasmosis
3. Cat hair

Us on Us	Them on Them
Us on Them	Them on Us

1. Clean animals
2. Quiet
3. Low-maintenance  
No need to be taken outside
4. Super easy to house train
5. Protect your home from pests

1. Barking all the time
2. Dog bites
3. Dog poop
4. Wet dogs

## Us on Us

Let's start with the **first quadrant**. What are we saying about ourselves, our issue, or our plan? This is where we distill the core theme and positioning of the campaign –where we describe what we're *for*, rather than what we're against. Sounds simple, right? The irony is that many social change advocates, as well as political folks with a strong history of serving as Official Opposition, are so steeped in what I call a “culture of opposition” that they can find this step surprisingly challenging! But this is the place where we paint a brief but compelling picture about the vision we stand for – a picture our audiences can vividly imagine being part of.

## Them on Them

Now turn to the **upper right quadrant**. What is the “**other side**” saying about themselves and their position and plan? What is their call to action or solution? Complete the upper right quadrant with 1-5 bullet points, again using the best research available (e.g., based on mainstream and social media scans, or interviews with key opinion leaders). This is another place where I've seen some advocacy groups get tripped up: sometimes, because they don't feel the opponents' arguments are legitimate, they don't take the time to deeply understand them. Their counter-arguments then ring hollow, and fail to reach or convince those all-important ‘persuadable’ target audiences.

## Them on Us

The next two quadrants are relatively easy. What are our opponents saying about us and our arguments? How will they seek to frame our issues and position us overall? They will almost certainly be seeking to highlight our weaknesses, and to then contrast those with

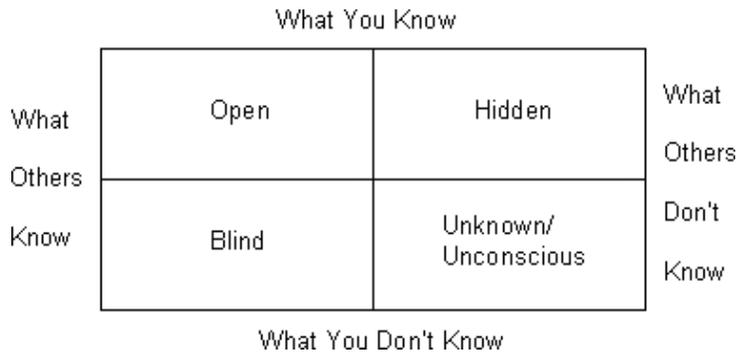
their own strengths and the merits of their positions. In a political or highly contentious advocacy campaign, they will seek to dominate the debate here – to put our team on the defensive. Anticipating those aspects of the message box will help your campaign team prepare to inoculate or mitigate against those message elements.

### **Us on Them**

The final quadrant is where your team prepares to pre-empt the messages of your opponents. What are we saying about the other side and *their* plan or position? What are their weakest positions and arguments – and how do they contrast with our strengths most starkly? It is from this quadrant, along with “Us on Us”, that a campaign team will seek to dominate the debate through strong, effective messages.

Overall, a campaign will always seek to control the message; in other words, to dominate the debate from the left-hand column. And while you may craft a message box at the beginning of a campaign, it is unlikely to remain static. The communications landscape is dynamic; peoples' views change, the tenor and intensity of media stories shift, and new players enter the debate. This means that messaging needs to change over time. In a political campaign, while the core messaging themes may remain consistent, some elements of a message box may change from week to week.

# The Johari Window



1. **Open/self-area or arena** – Here the information about the person - their attitudes, behaviour, emotions, feelings, skills and views will be known by the person as well as by others. This is mainly the area **where all the communications occur** and the larger the arena becomes the more effectual and dynamic the relationship will be. 'Feedback solicitation' is a process which occurs by understanding and listening to the feedback from another person. Through this way the open area can be increased horizontally decreasing the blind spot. The size of the arena can also be increased downwards and thus by reducing the hidden and unknown areas through revealing one's feelings to other person.

2. **Blind self or blind spot** – Information about yourselves that others know in a group but you will be unaware of it. Others may interpret yourselves differently than you expect. The blind spot is reduced for an efficient communication through seeking feedback from others.

3. **Hidden area or façade** – Information that is known to you but will be kept unknown from others. This can be any personal information which you feel reluctant to reveal. This includes feelings, past experiences, fears, secrets etc. we keep some of our feelings and information as private as it affects the relationships and thus the hidden area must be reduced by moving the

information to the open areas.

4. **Unknown area** – The Information which are unaware to yourselves as well as others. This includes the information, feelings, capabilities, talents etc. This can be due to traumatic past experiences or events which can be unknown for a lifetime. The person will be unaware till he discovers his hidden qualities and capabilities or through observation of others. Open communication is also an effective way to decrease the unknown area and thus to communicate effectively.

# The Pivot

The **pivot** is a way of responding to a **question** that might be on a specific subject,

...and moving to **answer** it on your own terms, so you stay on your core message.

The **pivot** is a way of responding to a **question** that might be on a specific subject, and moving to **answer** it on your own terms, so you stay in your message box.

# Difficult Questions

## 3. Use cases

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# The Job Interview

- Situation
- Task
- Approach
- Result
  
- Plan ahead
- Know your topic
- Know your audience. LinkedIn, Facebook
- Follow and affirm.
- Non-confrontational
  
- Use **STAR** approach to **pivot** to illustration of core message.

## STAR approach

Be very careful how you tell them they are wrong. Don't expect traps. Ask for clarification

# The Press Interview

- Plan ahead - think about trap questions
- Know your topic
- Know your audience. Facebook, Google
- Follow and affirm interviewer.
- Don't hesitate to stop and re-do
- Non-confrontational
- Use stories with consent or anonymize.
- Be very friendly

# The Q&A session

- Plan ahead - think about trap questions
- Dont feel forced to answer questions. Pivot
- Repeat question, paraphrase.
- Limit your answer to 1 minute
- Have somebody ready to intervene
- Use stories with consent or anonymize.
- Be very friendly
- Set a limit on outrage
- Offer to follow at end of meeting

Giving up mike.

Limit to 1 question, 1 follow up

Limit questions to 1 minute. 1 minute answer

# The news conference and scrum

- For Soundbites: short, clear messages
- Repeat core message
- Press release with all the facts.
- Answer exactly. It's being recorded.
- Have somebody there to stop the show
- Pick who asks the question
- Find out who is there
- Keep scrum short.

# The Elevator Pitch



1. Stimulate interest.
2. Transition that interest.
3. Share a vision.
4. Call to action
5. Offer to follow up
6. 2 minutes