

STATE My Path

The Benefit of Starting with Facts

Facts are fact. The least controversial part of the Path to Action is what we saw or heard. If we are honest in sharing all the facts, these facts will build a foundation of shared meaning.

Facts are more persuasive. When we want to share something that others are likely to resist, it is far more effective to share the facts behind our story before we share the story itself. On the other hand, when we share only harsh or ugly conclusions, people can't figure out why we've drawn those conclusions and we run the risk of being seen as the villain.

Facts are least insulting. Stories are typically made up of rather unattractive conclusions. For example, you think a person is lazy or irresponsible or a backbiter. If you share these conclusions, it's only natural that others will feel hurt or insulted. In contrast, when you share only what you've seen or hear, other are far less likely to be offended.

Feelings and stories often keep us from facts. If we start by sharing our feelings or stories, others often don't understand what we're talking about. For example, we tell a friend that he can't be trusted (our story). We offer no further explanation, so he isn't sure why we drew such an unattractive conclusion. Since he's been accused of being untrustworthy, it's only natural that he becomes defensive. An argument ensues, and the original facts never make it into the conversation.

Practice: Look at the list below, select a word and think about the facts you would use to give feedback to an individual before sharing your story. Identify 3-4 observable behaviors.

Disorganized Boring Needy Disrespectful Hard to get along with	
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