

PAUSE—The First Step of PLEDGEtalk

(Transcript)

Hi I am Mark Oelze. Welcome back to the PLEDGEtalk online mini-course where you will learn a “how to” for when communication *really* matters!

Remember how we said in the first video, that there are literally countless moments in conversations when we stand at a crossroads, if we say the right thing, we breathe a sigh of relief, as the conversation continues in a good direction. Say the **wrong** thing, and -- whew -- no tellin where things might end up!

Learning PLEDGEtalk will help you know what to do and say at those very moments - when you are standing at the crossroad.

This is the first of 6 videos, where I will walk you through each of the steps of PLEDGEtalk, one day at a time.

Keep in mind as I teach each step, you will see they are not new ideas. You will know them to be true when I talk about them. Sadly however, they lie dormant in the back of our minds. The challenge is to recognize them and understand their necessity so that we can bring them to the forefront of our minds and act upon them.

With the exception of this video, each will be 6 to 7 minutes in length.

In this first video, I am going to give you an overview of the PLEDGEtalk process and then teach a bit more about the first step - which is why this will be just a bit longer.

So hang with me!!

First, an overview of the entire PLEDGEtalk process. I will talk about it in the context of helping us know what to do when in the midst of a conflict.

None of us wake up thinking, “today is a great day for a conflict!” No! Instead, we simply find ourselves in the midst of a conflict, often not even knowing why. What do we do?

Recently, my youngest daughter called me up and said, “Dad, can we talk?” I said, “sure.” and she responded: “Dad I was frustrated at you the other day by the email you sent me. It made me feel like I was more of a child than an adult.”

Immediately I was taken aback and the self-talk in my head was pretty reactive. I quickly had to remind myself of the first and best thing I could do.

That first step is to PAUSE. Conflict happens to all of us, but it goes from bad to worse because of our reactivity. If there is any hope for handling conflict in a successful way, we must be intentional about *how* we interact. This almost always necessitates that we Pause to keep from reacting and to shift towards a healthy way of relating.

The second step is to LISTEN. Once we have stopped reacting, and shifted towards a healthy way of relating, we come back to the table with one person volunteering first to listen to the other person's concerns.

The third step is to ECHO. Once the one listening has heard the other's concerns, he or she must echo back what was said to clarify and be sure if they heard correctly.

The fourth step is to DISARM. When it is clear that we did hear correctly, we disarm the conflict by validating what was said.

The fifth step is to GIVE. Only after validating the other's concerns and perspective, can we then Give our perspective. When doing this, the roles are reversed and now the first person that was speaking becomes the one who Listens, Echo's, and Disarms/validates.

The 6th and last step in PLEDGEtalk is to ENGAGE. Once both parties have taken on the role of Listening, Echoing, and Disarming the other person, both parties may need to go back and Engage the process again to talk through the matter further. This continues until either the conflict is resolved, or the individuals come back to a place of love or mutual respect of each other.

So once again the steps are:

Pause
Listen
Echo
Disarm
Give
Engage

You may have noticed that the steps form an acrostic with the word PLEDGE. We call them the PLEDGEtalk principles or PLEDGE principles for short.

Don't worry about getting all the steps down right now. You will learn them as we go along over the next few days.

One very important note: to process conflict in a healthy manner, it is critical that both parties make a **PLEDGE**. **That Pledge is to value the other above yourself.** It is the fundamental premise of PLEDGEtalk.

Remember how we learned such simple lessons in Kindergarten like:

- Its important that we share with our classmates
- We need to respect our teacher
- Doing helpful deeds like holding the door open for others is a good thing

We were taught to value others above ourselves on such occasions.

It is a principle that has been taught for 2000 years written by the Apostle Paul who said: "...in humility, value others above yourselves..." NIV

We must recognize the importance of this value in our relationships, and learn to practice it in all our communication.

As we continue on you will see why the PLEDGE to "value others above yourself" is so critical to good conversation and resolving conflict.

Now... let me spend the last few moments of this video, talking about the first and most important step of the PLEDGETalk Process: that of **Pausing** before we speak.

We have all said things we wished we could take back. With shame and regret, I still remember some of those moments in my life. Had I early on developed the habit of Pausing to consider what I say, I might have saved myself and others a lot of grief.

There is a Proverb that says: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." What you and I say to each other is really important. The very words you say to your spouse, your child, your friend, your co-worker, your boss--and really everyone--truly matters. The words that come out of your mouth and mine will bring encouragement, hope, and life to the one we are speaking to, or bring discouragement, despair, and death. Words we speak can help a relationship flourish, or cause it to die.

So the first reason we must learn to Pause before we speak, is so we are careful not to bring death but life to the person we are speaking to.

Here's the second reason: when in the midst of conflict, we must Pause -- to give our emotions time to dial down. PET scans of the brain show that when our emotions are high, the rational part of our brain literally shuts down. As it turns out there is more truth than not when someone says: "I was so mad I couldn't think straight!" Next time you are so mad, Pause for a bit, to let your anger cool down. Doing so, will also give time for the rational part of your brain to come back online. You will also be able to remind yourself of your PLEDGE--to value the person you are speaking to above yourself.

The third and greatest reason we must Pause before we speak is to align our intentions with our PLEDGE.

It is one thing to make a PLEDGE to value others above ourselves when communicating. It is quite another thing to live out that PLEDGE. We must regularly Pause to tune in to how well we are doing. As often as needed, you and I must purposefully shift our intentions back to valuing the one we are speaking to above ourselves.

Here's what I mean: when my daughter said I made her feel more like a child than an adult in an email I sent her, I had a number of reactions going on inside my head:

I wasn't treating her like a child...I was only trying to help. She is being too sensitive. She's missing my heart. I am just trying to love her. Why is she using this as an opportunity to be mad at me? She's learned the principles of PLEDGE too well and she's using them to her advantage!

Ugh!!! I had all those reactions and probably more! Thank goodness I didn't verbalize them.

But imagine if I had! Where would the conversation have gone if I had said: "I'm not treating you like a child - you are just being too sensitive! You are just using what I have taught you and using it to take advantage of me!"

Whew - that would have been horrible! The conversation would have either escalated with both of us hurting each other further. Or, my daughter could have shut down, and vowed to herself to never share her real feelings with me again. How sad that would have been for both of us.

Instead I immediately put myself in the Pause mode so I could let me emotions calm down, get the rational part of my brain back online, and shift my heart inline with my PLEDGE--to value her and her thoughts and feelings above my own.

What a difference that made in the rest of our conversation! It was beautiful!

Tomorrow I will share more on how beautiful it was!

Here's my challenge for you today. It's very simple: Practice pausing before you speak in every conversation and especially when at a crossroads - when what you say next *really* matters!

Practice PAUSING!

For example:

- Someone asks you a question? Don't just answer with the first thing that comes to mind. PAUSE and think a moment.
- Your spouse or child snaps at you in some way? PAUSE! Don't snap back! Let your emotions and theirs dial down. If you are a person who prays, ask God for wisdom how to respond.

- Your friend or co-worker shares something frustrating or disappointing in their life. Don't just throw out some quick advice or chime in with your own frustrations in life as well. Instead, put yourself on PAUSE and think a bit. What words of life could you speak to them if right that moment you were valuing them above yourself?

And one more idea: Share this with someone before you move on with your day. YES, it helps us, and YES we want to get this message out to as many people as possible, BUT MORE THAN THAT - by you sharing this with someone, you are in essence helping yourself because telling someone else what you are doing helps reinforce behavioral change!

Remember this is a step-by-step process. In one week you will be well on your way to knowing what to do and practicing what to say the next time you are caught up in a moment, when communication REALLY matters!!!

For today: PRACTICE PAUSING!

See you in tomorrow's video!