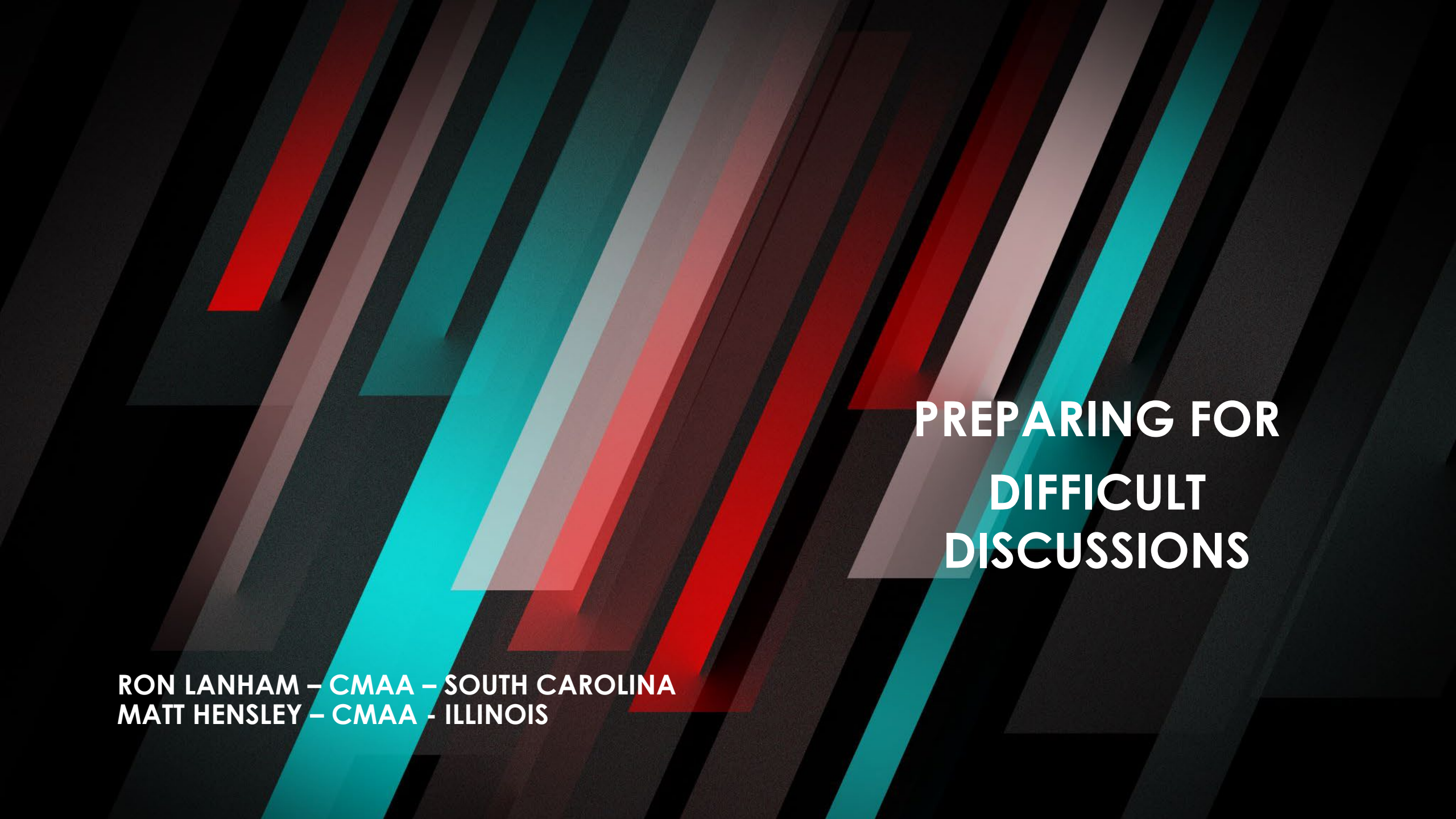


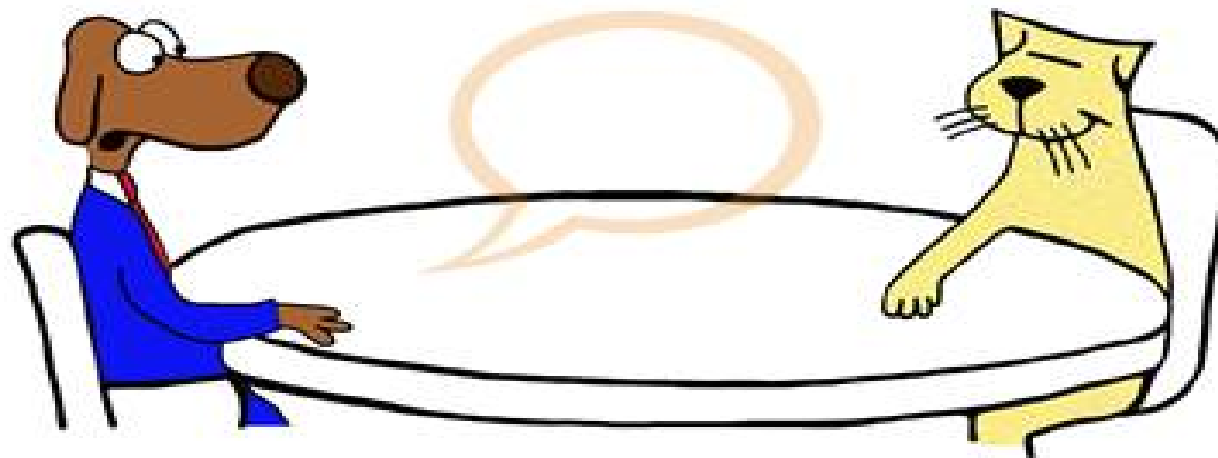
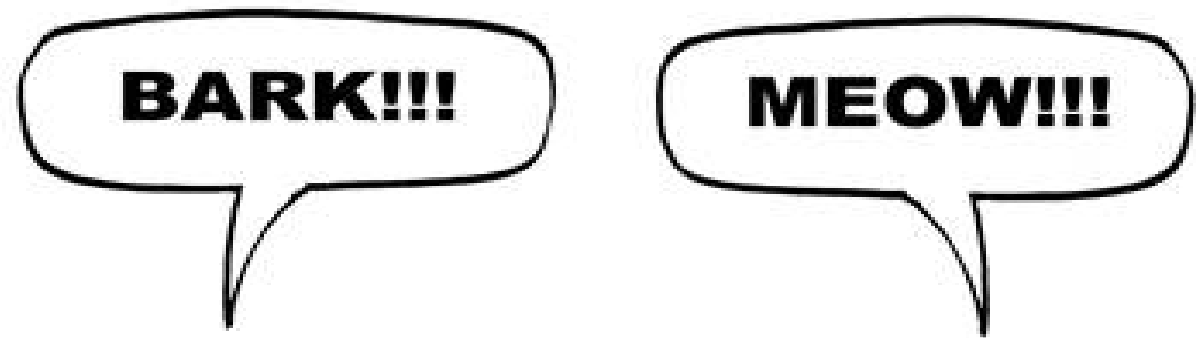


PREPARING FOR DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS

RON LANHAM – CMAA – SOUTH CAROLINA
MATT HENSLEY – CMAA – ILLINOIS

Why are Difficult Conversations So Hard?

- People are emotional creatures – conversations involve emotions such as fear, anger, frustration, conflict and anxiety
- Emotions are usually pent up and at a boiling point or explosive
- Behaviors driven by strong emotions can be inappropriate
- Someone is seeking an advantage or a change in someone's behavior – often difficult and resistance will follow
- Listening skills are often not at their best as one or both parties are concentrating on BEING heard and/or “winning”
- We don't always hear the intended message as we are formulating our response or we are shutting down due to being defensive



They had a tendency to talk past one another.

Why are these conversations important??

- We demonstrate we care enough to bother vs. sweep things under the rug and ignore potentially disastrous situations
- We show we respect other's opinions, perspectives and circumstances
- It gives everyone a chance to be heard and limits the chances we may have missed something important due to not having discussions
- We create trust and foster respect with others
- We build confidence in ourselves and build stronger relationships
- We handle things in a face-to-face manner, as opposed to doing everything through text or email



Whose Fault is it?

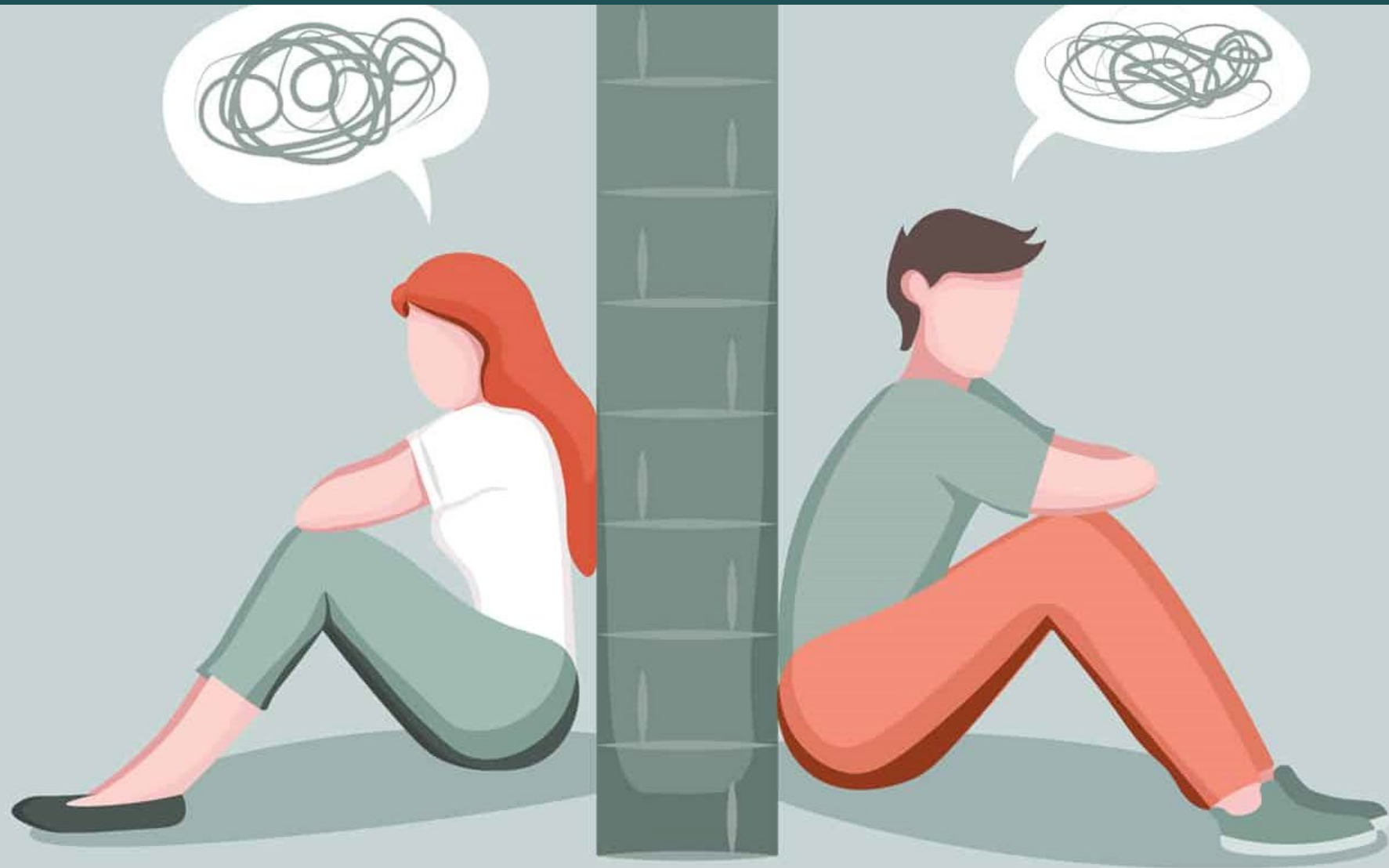
Whose to Blame?

Where do I start?

How do I begin?

What do I say?

- ▶ Know the purpose for your conversation
- ▶ Know what you want the outcome to be
- ▶ Who is your “opponent” and what is their objective?
- ▶ Are you making assumptions about their intentions? What is your level of anxiety going into the conversation? Why?
- ▶ What buttons are being pushed for either of you? Is there prior history or underlying factors leading to this?
- ▶ Listen for understanding, not judgment!





AM I MAKING MYSELF CLEAR??

Let's Do This!!

- ❖ WHEN YOU BECOME A LEADER, ONE OF YOUR HIGHEST RESPONSIBILITIES BECOMES THE **GREATER GOOD OF THE TEAM AND ORGANIZATION!**
- ❖ PRACTICE!!! PRACTICE!!! PRACTICE!!! BE PREPARED AND KNOW WHAT YOUR MESSAGE IS GOING TO BE!
- ❖ START WITH POSITIVE STATEMENTS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE SKILLS AND WORTH OF OTHERS – “I’D LIKE YOUR OPINION ON...” “I NEED YOUR HELP WITH SOMETHING...”
- ❖ DO ALL YOU CAN TO REACH A COMMON GROUND TOGETHER...BEING “LIKED” IS NOT YOUR GOAL....GETTING BETTER IS!
- ❖ HELPING PEOPLE IMPROVE IS YOUR ETHICAL OBLIGATION AS A LEADER!
- ❖ LEAVING THE WRONG PEOPLE HANGING AROUND CAN LEAD TO POOR MORALE AND GOOD PEOPLE ACTUALLY LEAVING. (CANCEROUS)

So.....who do we have difficult conversations with??

- ▶ Coaches
 - ▶ Parents
 - ▶ Teachers
 - ▶ Administrators
 - ▶ Other Athletic Directors
 - ▶ Vendors and Sales Reps
 - ▶ Service Personnel
 - ▶ Game Officials and Referees
 - ▶ Community Members and Organizations
-
- ▶ But.....what about the kids?? Our athletes?? Do you talk to them?

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)



Presented by
Matt Hensley
Assistant Principal
Mahomet - Sullivan

2021 National Athletic Directors Conference
Denver, Colorado

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Noise...Noise...Noise...

99% of the arguments and pain you suffer from other people...

...is a result of listening to that person's words instead of watching their actions.

So many people talk a big game ... but never deliver.

So, instead of getting hypnotized by their words...

See how much they act on their promises...

...then build your expectations based on that.

- A. Frisella

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Noise...Noise...Noise....

In spite of all of the the noise in schools today, there remains a singular group of voices that remain muted...

I would argue that those voices belong to our student/athletes.

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Don't Procrastinate....putting off a difficult conversation doesn't make it any easier. It doesn't help you sleep any better and chances are, the difficult conversation isn't likely as bad as you think that it's going to be

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Purpose...

Policy Related:
]

Student Behavior

Academic Eligibility

Athletic Code of Conduct Violations

Non-Policy Related

Cuts and/or playing time

Other Issues:

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Prepare...

Policy related conversations...must follow the policy (but make sure there is some gray area)

Non-Policy related conversation...who else needs to be part of the conversation. Parents, coach, others. Never have a conversation about cut and/or playing time without the student/athlete and coach present. Know what your non-negotiables are.

Script everything...have another person read the script prior to any conversation and keep good notes.

Stay out of the weeds...

Set a time limit...

Remove the emotion...it's not personal, it just seems that way

Preparing for Difficult Conversations (2021 - Why Is Everything a Thing?)

Closure...

Restate the obvious so that everyone understands the outcome...

Offer solutions where necessary...

Keep your word...Do what you say you are going to do...Be nice to others...It's that simple

And...always remember, kids are resilient, they will weather the storm and move on far more quickly than the adults in the conversation
