



Episode 69: How to Move Through Challenges More Easily

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, let's give you another tool for those times when you're feeling stuck or having trouble making a decision. We all have times when we wish we could move something forward more easily – whether a project, a delegating situation, a relationship, or a personal goal.

Those times can feel difficult because you might not know what to do next. The thing you're working on or thinking about feels like a challenge. You wish you knew why it was hard to move forward and how to get unstuck.

There is a way to move through challenges more easily – and that's our topic today.

To get unstuck – and to understand what's really going on – takes space and reflection. You need to push the pause button, ask yourself a question, and then think about your answer. When you do that, you get clearer about the cause of the challenge. And when you have more clarity about the root of the problem, it's easier to know what you need to do or communicate next.

It sounds easy, and it can be tricky to remember to pause. Because when we're in the midst of a challenge, we feel pressured to move forward or solve the situation now. When our thinking is stressed, we forget that we can take another approach and think differently.

Today's tool is one that you can use to coach yourself and others when things feel hard. It's an invitation to your brain to get curious about the specific sticking point in the challenge. When you let go of judgement and get curious, insights emerge. And when we have new insights and see things more clearly, we can choose and take action more easily.

When you want to solve a challenging situation more easily, here's the approach.

The first step is to pause, ask yourself a question, and let your brain have time to think.

The question to ask yourself is this: What's the real challenge for me?

In a tricky situation, our brains get muddled up. We lose clarity. The question we need to start with is one to help us find clarity in the chaos.

We ask: What's the real challenge for me? At this time, or with this person, or in this situation?

And here's the best part. You're going to prompt your brain with answers that I call the real C challenge words. You're going to offer some suggestions to your brain so your brain can assess them to come to an answer more easily.

I call the answers the real C challenge words, because they're all words that all begin with the letter C. They're also all words that could be the source of the challenge for you.

Let's talk through them.

The first real C challenge word is **clarity**. In a tricky situation, often the real challenge is clarity. You might not be clear about expectations, or if your direct report is having trouble moving something forward, they might not be clear about priorities. In coaching, we talk about clarity a lot, because clarity is key. When we're clear about what we want, what the goal is, and what our role is, it's easier to move forward.

So the real challenge for you might be clarity.

It might also be **communication** – our next real C challenge word. Sometimes, people are clear about what they want and their role, and where they get stuck is with communicating the information. Maybe they're not sure how or when or what mode to use to communicate what they want.

The third real C challenge word is **confidence**. Sometimes, the challenge is really a confidence issue. The person might know what they want and how to communicate it, and their inner critic or impostor syndrome keeps them stuck. They need more confidence to take action.

Sometimes, the real C challenge word for people is **calm**, meaning their stress is undermining their thinking. Stress keeps our brains from thinking effectively. When we return to calm and center, our body can relax and we often then know exactly what to do.

So far, we have 4 real C challenge words that could be the source of what's really going on: it could be a lack of clarity, not knowing how to communicate, a lack of confidence, or not staying calm.

Here are a few more real C challenge words.

Another real C challenge word for what's keeping someone stuck is **community**, meaning people and partnerships. You might have clarity about what you want and the next steps, and you might not be sure who can help or who to reach out to.

The last real C challenge word that I'll share here is **control** – this one pairs nicely with clarity. Sometimes, a situation is hard to move forward because there are decisions and information that are out of your control. Getting clear on what's in and not in your control is the first step to move forward.

As you listened to the different real C challenge words, I hope that you can see how stopping to consider and identify what the real C challenge for you is can be helpful. After you identify the true obstacle, you can focus your problem solving in a targeted way.

That's because the way forward through a challenge will look different depending on the cause of the stuckness.

If your real C challenge is clarity, you're going to ask yourself some clarifying questions next. If your real C challenge is confidence, you're going to have a chat with your inner critic and do some power posing. If your real C challenge is communication, you might give yourself permission to write a messy first draft of a message to send. If your real C challenge is staying calm, you might take a few deep breaths or do a gratitude practice.

When we understand what's really going on, we more easily know what to do. It's like how doctors want to understand the cause of symptoms before they offer a treatment. You get to use the real C challenge word tool to diagnose the cause of your stuckness so that you can treat it appropriately.

Here's a quick client example. A client came to coaching with a challenge: there was some negative news that was floating around her organization and it was having an impact on how people felt and the rumors they were spreading. My client wanted to address the situation, and she wasn't sure where to start.

I invited her to think about the question: what's the real challenge for you with this situation? And then we talked through the different real C challenge words. As we went through the list of the words, my client felt into each one to get a sense of what was really getting in her way.

She realized that she had two real C challenge words going on. Although she was clear that she wanted to send a message to the company, she was stuck with the communication piece. She didn't know how she would communicate or exactly what to say. She did feel confident, although wasn't quite clear about the community piece and who to talk with next.

By the end of our conversation, it was much clearer to her which pieces of the situation were trickiest: the Communication and the Community, meaning who to partner with. After she identified those, she felt like she could tackle the situation. She drafted an email and reached out to a colleague. It all felt much more containable and easier to manage than she originally thought.

That's the benefit of the real C challenge tool and words. When you ask yourself, "What's the real challenge for me?" and answer by thinking through the real C challenge words, you can choose a next action step to help move you forward.

Clarity helps us make decisions, communicate more directly and confidently, and move through our day with more ease and peace of mind. And that helps us achieve, innovate, collaborate, and lead – whether leading ourselves, our family, our team, or our organization.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you want help creating a plan to move through your challenges with more efficiency, please reach out. Email me at deb@debelbaum.com or go to my website debelbaum.com to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!