



Don't be flighty. An honest chat will have the best outcome.

## Honesty & Hard Conversations

The Love Scout by Scout Smith-O'Leary

While most of us like to think we are generally virtuous and honest people, living and relating with integrity is often much harder in real life. Honesty isn't black and white, it's a spectrum; brutally honest sits on the far left, omission in the middle and deceit and lying being down the right end. Every time we open our gobs, our honesty falls somewhere on that line.

100% honesty all the time isn't practical. We'd probably end up single, jobless and with a whole mess of burned bridges and problems. The idea of the spectrum is to get you to reflect on the extent to which you are being honest.

Honesty and integrity go hand and hand, and often they coincide with hard conversations. While distraction and avoidance are handy short term fixes, not having hard conversations can significantly impact our mental health, physical health and

psychological well-being. Is there a hard conversation that you need to have with someone in your life? If so, the formula below can help you navigate just that.

### The formula for having hard conversations:

1. **ASK** – Do you have the capacity for a (insert adjective) conversation?
2. **SET-UP** – I want to tell you something
3. **EXPLAIN** – I haven't told you yet because I'm afraid...
4. **SUGGEST** – What I'd like to happen is...
5. **DELIVER** – What I want to say is...
6. **THANK** – Thanks for taking the time to listen...
7. **RE-VALUE** – I really appreciate our relationship. It means a lot to me...

So, what's the method to

the madness? Remember the last time somebody just dropped a massive bomb on you and you weren't prepared? Not good, right. When we need to have hard conversations, we owe it to our loved ones to pay them some simple respects. We should check in with them and make sure they are emotionally regulated, have time and capacity, and give them a moment to settle in. In order to get the best possible outcome, set up an emotional container.

Once you have their full attention, let them know why it hasn't come up before. Many hard conversations go pear shaped because the listener reacts and gets angry about possible lying or omission that has gone on before. This is your opportunity to be authentic and vulnerable. The more vulnerable you are, the more likely it is that your listener will lean in with empathy and compassion rather than aggression, hostility and judgment.

Give them a desired outcome so you both have something to work towards, and then deliver the thing you want to say. Be humble, express gratitude, and make your listener feel valued and appreciated. It's hard to show up on both sides of a hard conversation so the easier we can make it for everyone, the better. Remember that this formula is not fool proof and there will be hiccups along the way, but at least you have a practical framework to fall back on. Here's to strong relationships built on trust, honesty and integrity. Cheers!

Scout is a Matchmaker and Relationship Educator.  
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Jacaranda Trees, Sydney

## Purple Makes Me See Red...

Mal's Wild Side By Malcolm Fisher

Surely everybody loves the Jacaranda trees whose glorious lavender haze adorns our suburbs in October/November. What kind of twisted fool could ever diss them? Well, here's my exasperated gripe. These South American imports are an illusion of beauty. We've been seduced by their enticing colour. Jacarandas are to biodiversity what Barbara Cartland is to literature, all saccharine and no substance.

Over time, Sydneysiders have inexorably removed the city's majestic Eucalypts and Angophoras (which provide vital food and habitat for our wildlife) and replaced them with these "bludger trees" which offer nothing to the environment but human eye candy. It's now got to the stage where deluded individuals even book cruises to view the Jacarandas around Sydney Harbour...as if they were a natural phenomenon!

Sadly, Jacarandas have become ubiquitous from Avalon to Zetland (and everywhere in between). In South Africa's Pretoria, they've "wised up".

The "Jacaranda City" (featuring 55,000 such trees) has now classified these purple pests as an "invasive alien plant" due to its destructive root system and thirst for water. You can tell I'm not a fan of Jacarandas but don't get me started on Agapanthus ... another introduced purple pollutant that seems to be the unimaginative "plant of choice" for McMan-sion dwellers everywhere.

The Agapanthus was enthusiastically promoted by controversial TV Gardener, Don Burke, but it's actually an invasive weed from South Africa that can spread into bushland and overwhelm native species. It's been said that if our great city hadn't been plonked on top of Farm Cove, the Sydney environs could have become Australia's most spectacular National Park. After all, our region contains over 2,000 native plant species, many more than in the entire U.K. But since Captain Cook first landed, we've been decimating the natural vegetation at warp speed. Walk down any

suburban street and, chances are, you'll find not one blade of remnant native grass.

If the odd "native" flower does appear, chances are it is not an indigenous species but a hybridised product of the horticulture industry, with a name such as "coconut ice" or "peaches and cream". It's these kinds of cultivars that provide an unnatural, but bountiful, food supply for Noisy Miners, identified as being the world's most aggressive territorial bird. They've chased virtually every other avian species out of town!

Tim Low in his book "Feral Future" argues that gardening has done more to harm Australia's environment than mining. It has certainly contributed greatly to the introduction of the more than 3,000 weed species which have become established in Australia at a cost to the economy of over \$5 billion per annum (in terms of lost agricultural production and biodiversity impacts). In NSW, invasive weeds now make up a massive 21 per cent of the state's total flora.

Even many local Councils are complicit in the "genocide" of indigenous species, especially in our streetscapes. Why would they want to plant locally endemic Banksias when they could choose, hay fever inducing, London Plane Trees or American Liquidambar with invasive roots?

The original Sydney flora is diverse, beautiful, climatically hardy, needs no fertilizers or pesticides and supports our fauna. To plant these purple monstrosities is not just staggeringly boring, it's...dare I say it? Un-Australian!

PHOTO: STIM COOPER ON UNSPLASH