

Dignity Conversations: The Power of Dignity

CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD TO INSIGHT AND ACTION

In her book, *Dignity*, Donna Hicks writes, “*I saw that if indignity tears us apart, dignity can put us back together again. Dignity became the lens through which I made sense of the world from that point on.*”

- Is this convincing to you? Do you believe that treating each other with dignity can bring the country together?
- Have you seen this play out in a personal relationship? Did indignity contribute to the split? Did treating each other with dignity bring you back together?
- Can you think of a global event, perhaps involving war and peace, that illustrates these dignity principles?

Donna writes, “*Along with our survival instincts, the desire to be treated with dignity is the single most powerful force motivating our behavior. If we violate someone’s dignity repeatedly, we will get a divorce or a war or a revolution, because a desire for revenge is an instant response to a dignity violation.*”

- Do you agree with this? Do you think there are more powerful motivators than dignity? What would they be?
- Can you think of an exception or counter-example to Donna’s claim about revenge?
- Can you think of a conflict in your personal life – with family or friends or a work relationship – that is explained by these principles?
- Do you think this explains the political hostility in the United States?

Donna says that in her experience in international conflict resolution, if people can find a dignified way out of conflict, they will almost always take it.

- Does this ring true to you? Why or why not?
- Does this explain political and armed conflicts around the world? Do you believe that the sides keep fighting not because they like to fight or think they will win, but because it’s the only way to hold onto their dignity?
- Have you had personal experiences where two people – or two groups – refused to offer the other side a dignified way out and the struggle went on?
- Can you think of a conflict – personal or public – that was brought to an end because the groups arrived at terms that gave each side their dignity?