

Introduction to the Dialogs

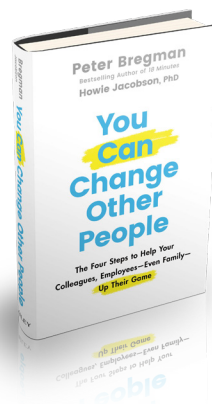
The following dialogues are written to help you put the Four Steps into practice. To protect privacy, they are composite situations, with invented names and details mashed together and changed.

I've tried to make them as realistic as possible, so that you can get a sense of the challenges you're likely to face, as well as ways to adapt the process to fit your circumstances. Remember, the outcome you want is to help someone change, not to get an A+ in Four Steps implementation!

You may read a dialog and think, "That's not realistic! The person I'm thinking of would never say that!" You're almost certainly right. This isn't computer code, where the proper steps in the proper order produce a predictable outcome. It's human, which means it's messy. But rather than dismiss the process — which I'm offering not as an infallible solution, but a best-odds approach based on the four fundamentals of change — ask yourself, "What would they say? And how would I respond to that?"

As much as the words of the dialog are meant to be useful and instructive, you may want to pay even closer attention to what isn't said. You see, I've gifted all my helpers in these dialogs with the ability to not get distracted or hooked by inflammatory comments. They are certainly more reliably focused than I am, some of the time. So as you put yourself in the shoes of the helper in each of the following dialogs, notice where you feel your frustration or anger rising. Notice what you feel the urge to say, and then see what these helpers say instead.

Given the constraints of a book, I've tried to cover as many different situations and dynamics as possible. For example, each of the four permission situations is represented (asking for advice, asking you to do it for them, complaining, and you initiating). One dialog involves a boss changing an employee; another reverses that dynamic. One scenario has one colleague trying to change another. Several include someone helping who isn't directly involved in the problem: a friend or an advisor. And one involves a married couple.



My goal in including so many diverse examples is to demonstrate how many different ways you can use the Four Steps. While the dialogues all adhere to the basic structure, they diverge from it as well. The commentary that accompanies each dialogue explains the reasoning behind the helper's "moves," connecting specific questions and statements to the chapters in which they're introduced and explained.

I've added background details about some of the businesses featured in the dialogues. Don't get distracted by them; I put them in for realism, so my protagonists wouldn't be stuck talking about "the project" and "the market" in a vacuum. Don't let your lack of familiarity with, say, the physics of cranes or the challenges of filtering arsenic out of drinking water get in the way of seeing how to apply the Four Steps in various situations.

Reading the dialogs is good for identifying the steps and seeing how they play out. But you also can learn a lot by listening to examples. That's why there's a growing library of audio examples on my website. Some are actual sessions that my students, colleagues, and friends have kindly allowed me to record and share. Others are dramatizations, so that Howie and I and others can satisfy our repressed theatrical ambitions. You can find them all at BregmanPartners.com/change.