

Rumble Starters
CIC Institute for Chief Academic Officers 2024
Dr. LeeRay Costa, Hollins University - lcosta@hollins.edu
Dr. Janet Clark, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College – jclark@smwc.edu

How can we better manage conflict and facilitate more productive conversations? In her book *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts*, Dr. Brené Brown offers a series of helpful “rumble starters” to do just that.

A rumble is “a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break and circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts, and, as psychologist Harriet Lerner teaches, to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard” (10).

Consider using some of these rumble starters and rumble tools in your difficult conversations. You might first practice with a friend or family member before trying them out with your colleagues. And you might introduce them as a useful practice with your work teams.

Rumble Starters:

1. The story I make up...
2. I’m curious about...
3. Tell me more.
4. That’s not my experience (instead of “You’re wrong about her, him, them, it, this...”)
5. I’m wondering...
6. Help me understand...
7. Walk me through...
8. We’re both dug in. Tell me about your passion about this.
9. Tell me why this doesn’t fit/work for you.
10. I’m working from these assumptions – what about you?
11. What problem are we trying to solve?

(for more detailed discussion of rumble starters, see pp. 171-181)