



THE
DISCONNECT
PRINCIPLE

MIND SHIFT
SUMMARY

The Disconnect Principle Mind Shift Summary by Ann Latham

This mind shift summary is intended for someone who has read *The Disconnect Principle*. Its purpose is to remind the reader of many of the key points so that they don't resort to old habits, both in thought and action. While the spirit of the *Disconnect Principle* is pretty simple to embrace, it isn't easy to implement because many of our traditional management beliefs and behaviors provide formidable obstacles to successfully recognizing and resolving disconnects.

Chapter 1 “We have a disconnect!”

The Disconnect Principle: When something doesn't go the way you expected, all you know for certain is that something didn't go the way you expected.

Whether you are dealing with a boss, a coworker, or a direct report, your best response is, “**We have a disconnect.**” This is a huge mindset shift. Instead of leaping to the conclusion that someone screwed up, you acknowledge that something didn't go as you expected.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
“You/they screwed up.”	➔	“That didn't turn out as I expected.”
Perpetual frustration	➔	Clarity, empathy, and pragmatic solutions
Difficult conversations	➔	“We have a disconnect.”
Fixing the person	➔	Fixing the situation

Chapter 2 Mind control ... Your first challenge

If you take a good look at all of the best practices for giving feedback mentioned in the Appendix of *The Disconnect Principle* and on the Internet, you will notice that they are all rules, tools, words, and tips for what you should *do*. While they provide good advice along those lines, they totally overlook what you should *think*.

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And the way we generally think about feedback, accountability, and performance management prevents us both from being clear, empathic, and effective and from feeling fair, helpful, reasonable, and confident.

No matter how carefully you script your language, your thoughts will betray you. Your body language, tone of voice, and any impromptu words will make your true thoughts obvious to your employee.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
Relying on rules, tools, scripts, and tips to speak your mind	➔	Taking care of your thoughts and seeking the disconnect
Knowing they screwed up again	➔	Shedding preconceived notions
Adding this latest transgression to the case against the employee	➔	Isolating and narrowing the focus to specific facts
Planning how to set them straight or rein them in	➔	Recognizing how little you actually know about the situation
Scripting difficult conversations	➔	Opening your mind to learning and unseen complications
Revealing your true thoughts with your body language, tone of voice, and impromptu words	➔	Treating others with empathy and respect and assuming good intentions
Feeling miserable and knowing your employee is just as mad or miserable	➔	Working together comfortably to resolve issues

Chapter 3 All feedback is constructive feedback

All feedback is constructive AND positive, because that's how we learn. That's the point! To be more effective. To do more of some things and less of others. To learn!

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The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
Some feedback is positive and other feedback is constructive	➔	All feedback is constructive
Constructive is negative but we shouldn't call it that	➔	Thinking positive vs. negative is destructive
The impact of behavior is either positive or negative	➔	Impact is usually both
We have to deal with bad behavior	➔	Behavior is intentional and unintentional with fortunate and unfortunate consequences
I need to give constructive feedback	➔	"We have a disconnect."

Chapter 4 Fix the situation, NOT the person

Ignore the invisible and focus on the visible. Personal characteristics are invisible. Focus on observable behavior and its impact instead. Your goal is to fix the situation, not the person.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
Frequent assumptions about invisible characteristics	➔	Realizing how often we do it
"They are lazy/ambitious."	➔	No more talk about what people are or aren't
Vague generalizations	➔	A focus on clear, specific facts
Anger and frustration	➔	Empathy and pragmatism
"They always screw that up."	➔	"We have a disconnect."

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“How can I fix them?”



“How can we fix this situation?”

Chapter 5 Do WITH, not TO

When you try to do something TO someone, you usually fail. When you try to do something WITH someone, you are far more likely to succeed.

When someone tries to control us, manipulate us, pressure us, or just tell us what to do, they are clearly trying to do something TO us, and we rarely respond well.

When someone is helpful and working WITH us, we feel supported and valued.

The problem is that many of our default interactions with employees are examples of doing TO, not WITH.

There are really only four WITH activities. You can listen, ask questions, answer questions, and offer to help. And the difference between doing TO and doing WITH can be as simple as gaining permission.

If you question whether you are being fair, you are probably about to do something TO someone.

The old way

Doing TO as we:

- Teach
- Coach
- Give feedback
- Set expectations
- Hold accountable
- Advise
- Direct
- Discipline
- Pressure
- Terminate

With the Disconnect Principle



Doing WITH by:

- Listening
- Asking
- Answering
- Offering

Chapter 6 Rethink accountability

Accountability is about collectively establishing commitments and delivering on those commitments so that the individuals can accomplish something no one could do alone.

Accountability partners don't hold anyone's feet to the fire. It is uncomfortable for all and accomplishes little. Partner for success by following all the mindshifts suggested in this book.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
Tell employees what to do and when	➔	Set expectations collaboratively
Require regular reports from all	➔	Check in as agreed when you established expectations
Check off tasks as completed	➔	Ask provocative questions that anticipate and prevent problems
Provide constructive feedback	➔	Insist that all feedback is constructive and dismiss the positive/negative dichotomy
Watch for evidence that confirms your fears and assumptions about the employee's performance	➔	Banish assumptions, judgments, and generalizations
Hold them accountable by applying appropriate pressure	➔	Be quick to recognize that "we have a disconnect."
Fix the employee	➔	Fix the situation
Do TO	➔	Do WITH
Clarify consequences	➔	Truly partner for success

Chapter 7 The mother of all disconnects

A mismatch between what the organization needs and what the employee is willing and able to offer is the mother of all disconnects.

Just as you can talk about disconnects without getting into personal characteristics, failures, or blame, you can talk about a mismatch (the ultimate disconnect) between employee and position without getting into personal characteristics, failures, or blame.

Fix the match, not the person.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
“You are lucky to have a job.”	➔	A win-win relationship
Boss dictates	➔	Boss learns about position and employee
Employee suffers	➔	Employee chooses
Boss rules	➔	Honest two-way exploration of match/mismatch
Boss fires	➔	Separation decisions are mutual, logical, empathic, and based on the mismatch

Chapter 8 Connecting through disconnects

The power of the Disconnect Principle is that it frees you from enervating emotions and preconceived judgments. It puts the focus on the situation, not the person. It treats all parties as equals deserving of respect and fair treatment.

The old way		With the Disconnect Principle
Feeling inadequate	➔	Feeling confident
Fear and avoidance	➔	Timely action

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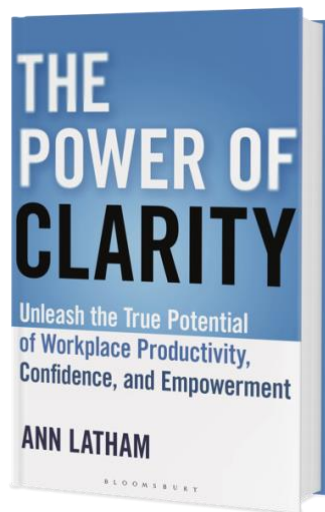
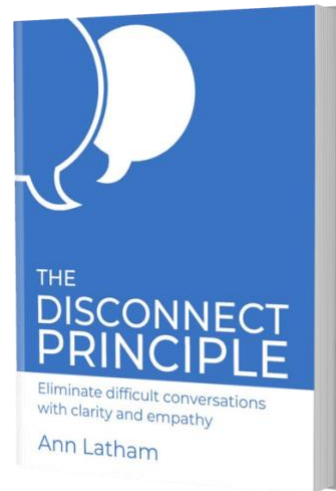
Burying the negatives in comfortable fluff	➔	Being clear and direct
Truly painful conversations	➔	Mutually agreeable problem solving
Continued or worsening problems	➔	Performance enhancing commitment and more effective behavior
Tiptoeing around problem employees	➔	Witnessing real improvement
Damaged relationships	➔	Strong trusting relationships
Adversaries	➔	Invaluable partners
Feeling miserable	➔	Being empathic
Perennial problems	➔	Pragmatic action

The Disconnect Principle is your chance to be your compassionate, humane, fair self with greater ease and less effort. Embrace the Disconnect Principle today!

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