Faithful Are the Wounds of a Friend

The Second Boardroom Language

Joab's ethical questions about people, process and policy seem to have taken root in the king's consciousness for 2 Samuel 24:10 indicates, "And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people." This reawakening within the king set the stage for the second boardroom language to be delineated—*speak in*. Speaking in can be defined as a follower's ability to utilize truth as a tool to transform both a leader's paradigm and their toxic behavior. Moreover, the premise of *speaking in* assumes that a follower has accessibility to their metaphorical king, usually due to their position at court.

In All of Your Getting

If an influencer has been trusted with proximity to a leader, it is imperative they embrace the counsel of Solomon, as recorded in Proverbs 4:7–8, "Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her." With regard to the boardroom language of *speaking in*, it would be a prudent gesture to understand the leader's preferred method of communication, which will increase the probability of the message being heard and proactively mitigate the loss of time. According to the emerging research of Mark Murphy, there are four

methods of transmitting messages that leaders typically employ within an organization. They include:

> The **Analytical Communicator** likes hard data, real numbers, and tends to be suspicious of people who are not in command of the facts and data. They typically like very specific language and dislike vague language.
> The **Intuitive Communicator** likes the big picture, avoids getting bogged down in details, and cuts right to the chase. They do not need to hear things in perfect linear order but prefer instead a broad overview that lets them easily skip right to the end point.
> The **Functional Communicator** likes process, detail, timelines and well-thought-out plans. They like to communicate things in a step-by-step fashion, so nothing gets missed.
> The **Personal Communicator** values emotional language and connection and uses that as their mode of discovering what others are really thinking. They find value in assessing not just how people think, but how they feel.[1]

A thorough understanding of the bosses' means of communication is the prelude to speaking in and is a fundamental virtue of bold followership. A bold follower goes the extra mile for an excellent leader who provides a legal and moral direction. This same follower has a righteous mandate to stand up to a flawed leader in the name of organizational health. Such a stance, to emphasise the point, is predicated on John 8:21, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The operative word in this passage is *know*—γινώσκω. The Greek term can be translated as to make acquaintance of, to learn, or find out. Thus, in this context, when a follower puts in the effort to learn about a leader's preferred method of communicating, then freedom will spring forth. That is, barriers that have the potential to undermine the sending and receiving of messages (i.e., presenting data to a personal communicator or details to a bottom line personality) will be removed, and the follower can focus on navigating the ensuing insights.

Speaking in with a Parable

The first methodology to speak in the life of a leader is a parable as depicted in Fig. 4.1. Copenhaver contends that "A parable is a weapon of weakness… A parable, however, can get past the defenses of our own behavior

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[1] Murphy, Mark. 2016. "My Boss And I Have Different Communication Styles, And It's Destroying Our Relationship." *Forbes.* April 24. Accessed October 16, 2017. https://www.
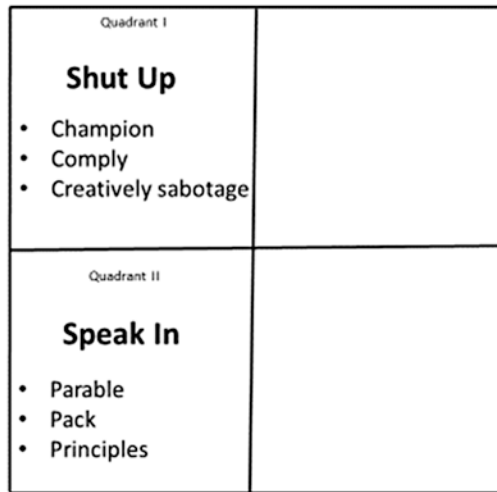
Fig. 4.1 Boardroom boldness language model—quadrant II

and reach the inner court where there is agreement about what is right and what is wrong…"[2] Such a weapon was utilized on David when his defenses were still up after the murder of Uriah. In 2 Samuel 12:1–7 we are told that Nathan entered the presence of the king in a respectful and dignified manner and painted a picture of a tale of two men. One was rich, and the other was poor. The rich man had an abundance of flocks whereas the poor man only had one lamb whom he loved. The rich man, explains the parable, unjustly took the poor man's lamb for selfish purposes. After presenting the details of the parable, David became furious at the man because he did not have mercy. To which, Nathan announced that the king was that man! As this story shows, parables can be an effective tool of correction when defenses are still up, but in this case, the narcissistic behavior of king-think had already subsided. Thus, such a technique would not neccessarily be advantageous in this scenario, but the following parable forms may be applicable.

forbes.com/sites/markmurphy/2016/04/24/my-boss-and-i-have-different-communication-styles-and-its-destroying-our-relationship/#70fdd36e38cc

[2] Copenhaver, Martin B. "He spoke in parables." *Christian Century*, July 13–20, 1994: 681.

The Parable of Data

The first form of a parable that a follower can employ to *speak in* the life of a leader is with data, which is when the sentiments of W. Edward Demming ring true, "In God we trust, but everyone else must bring data." Demming was a leading voice in the total quality management movement and an advocate of fixing systems to move the needle on production. In other words, painting an empirical picture of the organization can resonate for an analytical leader. Due to their propensity to be suspicious of assertions not grounded in data, this numeric parable can help a follower get past the defenses of flawed behavior and reach the inner court of consciousness. Such numbers, however, should never be purposefully skewed but should be presented in a valid, reliable, and ethical manner.

The Parable of BLUF

The bottom line up front (BLUF) approach is the second parable form. The BLUF tactic, which is primarily indigenous to the military, is essentially a practice of placing the recommended course of action at the beginning as opposed to the end of a conversation. This mechanism seeks to quickly answer the five W's: who, what, where, when and why.[3] By swiftly and accurately answering the five W's, it acknowledges that an executive is operating on a tight timeline and that it is critical to provide recommendations up front. This pathway, if delivered correctly, is ideal for the intuitive boss who values the big picture. Thus, if this form of parable is delivered with precision, the mindset of an executive could be transformed.

The Parable of a Manual

The third parable at the disposal of a follower is that of a manual. A book of instructions for operating a machine, learning a subject, or running a team is the language of the functional leader. This personality lives in the details of an issue, and the articulator of this parable form must be clear about the procedures. It would behoove a follower, in this example, to research the company's polices and synthesize the boss's intent in a logical direction. This pathway can proactively answer questions, eradicate any

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[3] Sehgal, Kabir. 2016. "How to Write Email with Military Precision." *Harvard Business Review.* November 22. Accessed October 21, 2017. https://hbr.org/2016/11/how-to-write-email-with-military-precision

perception of incompetence from the leader's perspective, and allow the truth locked within a manual to penetrate the heart of an influencer.

The Parable of Corporate Storytelling

The final parable form a follower can invoke to foster transformation is corporate storytelling. As in Nathan's conversation with David, this approach embraces company narrative to persuade. Denning contends that there are four types of story a follower can embrace.

First is the tale of a new business model, in which an influencer helps the sponsors or managers to see how the business will work once the change is undertaken.[4] This form of a story is predicated on the theory of business, either in the now or in the near future. Denning suggests that when embracing this narrative form a follower should endeavor to answer questions like, "Who is the customer? What does the customer value? How do we win (i.e., accomplish the mission)? What is the underlying logic that shows how we can deliver value to customers?"[5] President John F. Kennedy's *We Choose to Go to the Moon* speech is a stellar example of this model. JKF argued:

> We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theater of war. I do not say that we should or will go unprotected against the hostile misuse of space any more than we go unprotected against the hostile use of land or sea, but I do say that space can be explored and mastered without feeding the fires of war, without repeating the mistakes that man has made in extending his writ around this globe of ours. There is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again. But why, some say, the Moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? *We choose to go to the Moon!* …We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, *not* because they are easy, *but because*

[4]Denning, Steve. 2011. "The Four Stories You Need To Lead Deep Organizational Change." *Forbes Magazine*. July 25. Accessed October 22, 2017. https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/07/25/the-four-stories-you-need-to-lead-deep-organizational-change/#acaba1953b29

[5]Ibid.

they are hard; because *that goal* will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because *that challenge* is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and *one we intend to win*[6]

It can be argued that the above section of JFK's speech was the driving factor in Apollo 11's landing on the Moon on July 20, 1969. Although this is a macro level example, it can be reduced to a micro aspect and be applied to smaller organizations.

A criticism of the new business model is that it can be perceived as too abstract and those on the receiving end may be inclined to marginalize this delivery pathway. To this end, the second type of corporate storytelling—the burning platform story—may resonate. The intent of the burning platform, contends Denning, is to explain "why the way of operating in the past that was so successful is no longer successful and is leading to disaster."[7] This rhetorical appeal is important and should be grounded in the theory of the other side of innovation; the story should specifically caution against not falling victim to traps that are physical (i.e., investing in old systems), psychological (i.e., depending on past glories) or strategic (i.e., focusing on today's marketplace).[8]

The problem with this approach is that one can seem alarmist or pessimistic. Although the message may be factual, it may not be well received due to its tone. Hence, the third approach that can be employed is the springboard story, which is "is a story about the past—something that's already happened and because it has already happened, it is very believable. Because it is positive, it tends to spark action."[9] To restate this point biblically and in a slightly different manner, one should be guided by the wisdom found in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "That which has been *is* what will be, that which *is* done is what will be done, And *there is* nothing new under

[6] Kennedy, John F. 1962. *Rice University Speech.* Rice University, Houston. September 1.

[7] Denning, Steve. 2011. "The Four Stories You Need To Lead Deep Organizational Change." *Forbes Magazine.* July 25. Accessed October 22, 2017. https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/07/25/the-four-stories-you-need-to-lead-deep-organizational-change/#acaba1953b29

[8] Newman, Rick. 2010. "10 Great Companies That Lost Their Edge." *U.S. News.* August 19. Accessed October 23, 2017. https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/flowchart/2010/08/19/10-great-companies-that-lost-their-edge

[9] Denning, Steve. 2011. "The Four Stories You Need To Lead Deep Organizational Change ." *Forbes Magazine.* July 25. Accessed October 22, 2017. https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/07/25/the-four-stories-you-need-to-lead-deep-organizational-change/#acaba1953b29

the sun." As one looks for "that which has been done" in an organization, offering historical models may be the catalyst to spur modification.

The final corporate story can invoke the past as an influencer paints a vivid picture of the unspoken attitudes and assumptions that exist in a corporation. Such assumptions, however, have become so ingrained that they are no longer seen. This reality becomes problematic to production, particularly when behaviors undermine the mission. Karl Weick's sentiments ring true when he asks, "how can I know what I think, until I see what I say."[10] This story type takes the corporate thoughts of an organization and paints a relevant picture to help a leader see the impacts of past practices and the current emotions of the people. In the end, a picture is indeed worth a thousand words, particularly for the personal communicator.

SPEAKING IN WITH STRATEGIC PACK

The second system of speaking in the life of a leader is with the assistance of a strategic pack, alliance, or coalition. This pathway could indeed be a game changer, particularly for the leader who places a high premium on loyalty and an even higher subconscious value on having "yes people" around them. Such people are placed very close to the leader and are often rewarded with high ranking positions in the royal court. Such positions of privilege grant the followers access to the king's ear and by mobilizing these key personalities to communicate the same message to a leader suffering from king-think could remedy a flawed organizational decision. To illustrate this pathway, consider this course of action that successfully unfolded in the latter days of David's life of, as recorded in 1 Kings 1:1–14:

> Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm.[2] Therefore his servants said to him, "Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm."[3] So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.[4] The young woman *was* very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her.[5] Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before

[10]Weick, Karl. 1979. *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

him.[6] (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, "Why have you done so?" He *was* also very good-looking. *His mother* had borne him after Absalom.)[7] Then he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed and helped Adonijah.[8] But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the mighty men who *belonged* to David were not with Adonijah.[9] And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattened cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which *is* by En Rogel; he also invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants.[10] But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, or Solomon his brother.[11] So Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord does not know *it?*[12] Come, please, let me now give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.[13] Go immediately to King David and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord, O king, swear to your maidservant, saying, "Assuredly your son Solomon shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?'[14] Then, while you are still talking there with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words."

Within this passage, David was near to the end of his life, and Adonijah, son of Haggith, had made moves to appoint himself the new king of Israel. David's indifference about the manner (i.e. David had not rebuked him at any time by saying, "Why have you done so?") signaled to the nation that a new policy had been formulated—Adonijah will be the new king. In an endeavor to suppress this power play, Nathan created a strategic pack with Queen Bathsheba to speak in David's ear about the plot and remind him that Solomon was the preferred choice. This unlikely alliance persuaded David to muster up the strength to outmaneuver Adonijah and have Solomon declared as his successor.

Yulk elaborates on the utilization of packs, alliances, or coalitions. More specifically, this scholar contends that followers should "mention the names of others who endorse a proposal when asking the person to support it. Get others to explain to the person why they support a proposed activity or change. Bring someone along for support when meeting with the person to make a request or proposal. Get others to explain to the person why they support a proposed activity or change."[11]

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[11]Yulk, Gary. 2010. *Leadership in Organizations*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. p. 182.

A powerful example of such guidance was on display at the assembly of the First Continental Congress. Under British rule of the 13 American colonies, the tyranny of the king of Great Britain would prove to be overwhelming as the crown exercised authority with a firm fist from 1607 to 1776. However, as the enlightenment period took root and bold followers were being divinely positioned, the grip of the throne began to falter. With a litany of illegal and immoral acts imposed upon the colonies, those who fled oppression in hopes of freedom found themselves at a defining moment. Such a moment emerged upon parliament's approval to bail out the East India Company. This corporation was a pivotal cog in the economic machinery of the British government, for it generated £400,000 per year and owed the government £1,300,000 in 1773.[12] Due to fiscal necessity, the government devised a strategy to reinvigorate the firm and to keep the economy strong with yet another tax on the colonies, without representation.

Upon receiving notification of their intent and knowledge of three tea ships (i.e., the Dartmouth, the Eleanor, and the Beavor) being in port, colonial sympathizers—the sons of liberty—dressed up as Mohawk Indians and creatively sabotaged the government's plan by emptying 342 tea chests into the sea. This act, now famously referred to as the Boston Tea Party, infuriated the crown, and a measure was devised to starve the entire city into submission.[13] Moreover, the British insisted that the port remain closed until three conditions were met:

- The city apologized for the actions of the Boston Mutineers
- The East India Company had been reimbursed for the tea that had been destroyed
- The perpetrators of the crime had been presented for punishment.[14]

Once the news of the crown's latest action made its way through the colonies, one bold follower decided to build a strategic pack. On May 11, 1774, Samuel Adams called a meeting and made the recommendation to renew an old boycott of British goods. A byproduct of the gathering was a plan that read,

[12]Thompson, James C. 2010. *The Dubious Achievement of the First Continental Congress.* Alexandria, VA: Commonwealth Books. Kindle Loc. 628.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

It is the opinion of this town, that if the other colonies come into a joint resolution to stop all importation from Great-Britain and the West Indies, till the act for blocking up this harbor be repealed, the same will prove the salvation of North-America and her liberties. On the other hand, if they continue their exports and imports, there is a high reason to fear that fraud, power, and the most odious oppression, will rise triumphant over justice, right, social happiness, and freedom. And moreover, that this vote be transmitted by the moderator, to all our sister colonies, in the name and behalf of this town.[15]

The essence of this document was used to build a Solemn League or Covenant that called on every colonist to unite. Not only did this pack successfully resist the new demands of the crown but it also served as the key ingredient for a declaration of independence.

Speaking in with Principles

The third method to *speak in* is on principles. Principles, or standing on a set of values, when engaging a leader can be an equalizing factor. Chaleff explains this by asserting that, "followers usually cannot match up to a leader's external qualities, such as the trappings of formal power, and must find equal footing on intellectual, moral or spiritual ground"[16] A biblical example of speaking in with principles for the nation of Israel would be Gad, whose name can be translated as *good fortune*, was a relatively unknown yet powerful presence. When David was fleeing from King Saul and hiding in the cave of Adullam, it was Gad who gave him the principled counsel to go to Judah (1 Sam. 22:5). When the occasion called for an accurate and reliable chronicling of the life of David, Gad was named as one of the three to record history (1 Chr 29:29). Moreover, when the fate of a nation was hanging in the balance, it was the best practice found in 1 Chronicles 21:9–12— that prevailed.

Then the Lord spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying,[10] "Go and tell David, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: "I offer you three *things;* choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.""[11] So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Choose for yourself,[12] either three years of fam-

[15] Cohen, Lester H. 1990. *The History of the American Revolution*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
[16] Chaleff, Ira. 1995. *The Courageous Follower*. San Franciso: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. p. 26.

ine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking *you,* or else for three days the sword of the LORD—the plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now consider what answer I should take back to Him who sent me."

HISTORICAL TRUST

Four principles can be abstracted from Gad's methodology of *speaking in* the life of a leader as depicted in Fig. 4.2. The foundational concept revolves around historical trust, which can be defined as the positive and established expectations one person has toward another in situations involving risk.[17] To recap, Gad more than likely established trust by encouraging and advising David long before he was a king hiding in a cave. In 1 Samuel 22:5, David fled from Saul and requested refuge in Moab until he learned what the Lord would do for him (1 Sam 23). While there, the Lord sent Gad to provide a firm command to depart. Scholars suggest that such a directive was stated as a categorical prohibition, using a clause structure parallel to that employed in the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod 20:4–5, 12–17). The reason for the strong wording is simple: the Torah prohibited the establishment of friendly treaties with Moabites (cf. Deut 23:2–6). As a true prophet of the Lord, Gad's duty was to help others understand and heed the Torah. If David established such a treaty with the king of Moab, he would violate the Torah and so risk bringing judgment on himself and all who were with him.[18]

Fig. 4.2   The aspects of speaking in

[17] McShane, Steven L., and MaryAnn V. Glinow. 2013. *Organizational Behavior: Emerging Knowledge. Global Reality.* New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin., Loc 3986.

[18] Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, pp. 225–226). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

It should be noted that the counsel Gad gave David was risky because such an action could have been perceived as a treasonous act since Saul was still the reigning king who had a track record of murdering those who dared to assist David. This feat of putting his life on the line to help a young leader to survive the Saul's deadly grip must have elevated David's confidence in this prophet. This point is key, particularly in a culture that seems to applaud coat tail riding and being an opportunistic user of others. Without proven historical trust being the foundation of a relationship, one's ability to engage a leader may very well be over long before it begins.

SPIRITUALITY

The second driving factor that can be gleaned from Gad is spirituality, which equipped him with clarity of thought during times of ambiguity. Such clarity provided the prophet with the right message, at the right time, and gave him the right motive—to serve the son of Jesse in the same way he had done before David had power. Additionally, this seer's spirituality was his ultimate fuel for boardroom boldness, as Proverbs 28:1 reminds the reader, "the righteous are as bold as a lion." In other words, the closer one gets to walking in truth and living with a purpose, the more powerful the voice. It is this form of spirituality (i.e., being bold as a lion) that seemingly empowered Gad to use the third element of *speaking in*—straight talk.

STRAIGHT TALK

As 1 Chronicles 21:11 indicates, "So Gad came to David and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord'." What is interesting to note is what is not outlined in this brief text—pleasantries. Gad did not waste time catching up, breaking the ice, or sugarcoating. On the contrary, this adviser's historical trust allowed him to press through the royal court and bypass any gatekeeper to get to David. Once he made it to his destination, he talked straight. Covey describes this term best when he wrote that influencers should, "Be honest. Tell the Truth. Let people know where you stand. Use simple language. Call things what they are. Demonstrate integrity. Don't manipulate people or distort facts. Don't spin the truth. Don't leave false impressions."[19] It is this bold yet tactful showcasing of love that seemingly opened the door of David's heart to receive the next aspect of speaking in—courses of action.

[19] Covey, Steven. 2006. *The Speed of Trust*. New York: Free Press. p. 143.

Courses of Action

The final principle that can be learned from Gad is the way he clearly outlined courses of action for David to select. Although neither of the options was appealing, they were nonetheless clear, proportional, and factual. Consider David's options, "Choose for yourself,[12] either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking *you,* or else for three days the sword of the LORD—the plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel." The average boardroom member may be reluctant to present such hard courses of action out of fear. However, such individuals should take note that their obligation is to advise boldly and the leader's job is to decide ethically. In David's case, he decided for himself when he invoked king-think. Influencers should also be reminded of the truth located in Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." If this is true, then a possible inference is that one cannot be a friend if one is unwilling to *speak in*, even if it is painful.

Boardroom Boldness Chats

The 1985 New Coke Case

You are a member of the executive board of Coca-Cola in 1985. In an endeavor to keep the competitive edge, a study was commissioned to understand how the public would respond to a New Coke. A New York Time's report captured both the essence of the study and the decision of the executives, "When the Coca-Cola Company introduced a reformulated version of the world's best-selling soft drink on April 23, it was well aware that it might alienate some faithful Coke drinkers. The company, however, expected that alienation to fade. It was completely unprepared for how it would spread and deepen in the two months following the debut of the new Coke."

| Parable | ⬅ | Pack | ➡ | Principle |

Fig. 4.3   The spectrum of "speak in" boardroom language

1. While reflecting on the 1985 New Coke case, have a discussion on the best method to understand the top executives' preferred style of communication.
2. Have a discussion on the meaning and the possible application of a parable in this particular case to help reformulate a flawed executive decision. Within your discussion, role play the various forms of parable in this scenario.
3. Have a discussion on the meaning and the possible application of utilizing a pack in this particular case to help reformulate a flawed executive decision. Within your discussion, role play how one could possibly build a workplace "Solemn League or Covenant."
4. Have a discussion on the meaning and the possible application of standing on principles in this particular case to help reformulate a flawed executive decision. Within your dialog be sure to make a case for the most important component of *speaking in* with principles as depicted in Fig. 4.3.
5. Have a conversation on whether a hybrid of the *speaking in* would help or hinder the advisement role.