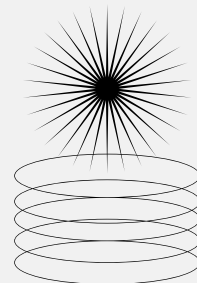


Preparing for a Difficult Conversation

Worksheet 1 - Situation



Difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right. They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values (Douglas Stone).

Taking time to prepare mentally for a difficult conversation will help you remain calm, increase the chances that the conversation will go smoothly, and improve the ultimate solution (Amy Gallo).

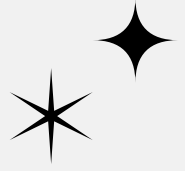
Suppressing our emotions can lead to bad results. Prevent your emotions from leaking out in the conversation by talking about them with a trusted colleague ahead of time (Susan David).

Tell people they matter by being prepared when they show up (Dan Rockwell).

Please take a moment to think of a situation or colleague where you felt stuck. Provide a detailed description.	
What is the specific issue you need to address?	
Please describe what frustrates you about the situation and how it makes you feel.	
What do you need or want as a result of the conversation?	

Preparing for a Difficult Conversation

Worksheet 1 - Preparing



Having difficult conversations requires being somewhat comfortable with the uncomfortable and courageously addressing important issues that others often avoid. Think about preparation as putting in place an approach which will set you up for success.

Consider the following checklist to ensure key aspects of preparation are not omitted.

1. Preparing the conversation environment.

- Confirm that the conversation setting will be neutral, private and safe.
- Assume positive intent with your colleague.
- Schedule time to reflect and ground yourself just before starting.

2. Structuring the conversation to guide dialogue.

- Defensive comments are to be anticipated. Imagine effective responses.
- Avoid attempts to debate the issue and redirect if necessary.
- Set a rough time limit, as open-ended conversations are often unproductive.

3. Preparing for active listening.

- Approach with an attitude of discovery and curiosity.
- Watch body language and facial expressions.
- Listen hard and do not interrupt.
- Ask follow-up questions for clarification.
- Repeat back what you have heard to ensure clarity.
- Use reflective statements to communicate your understanding.
- Share your perspectives while not undermining their perspective.

4. Maintaining focus and encouraging reason.

- Thank colleague for attending.
- State the reason for the conversation.
- Describe observed behaviours and the facts rather than hearsay.
- Clearly identify the resulting impact of the behaviour or actions on others.
- Be clear about what is happening, as being clear is being kind.

5. Managing emotions effectively.

- Take a deep breath before starting.
- Stay calm and encourage your colleague to do the same.
- Recognize your in situ emotional responses and pause if needed.
- Stay grounded and focus on the purpose of the conversation.
- Be prepared for a range of emotional responses, including anger, attack, and tears.

6. Identify the next steps.

- Thank colleague for their time and participation.
- Articulate next steps for colleague and yourself, including follow-up as needed.

