



Navigating Conversations in the Workplace

Healthy Conversations and Accountability in the Workplace

How can you get what you need and keep the professional relationship intact?



- **Difficult conversations aren't to be avoided** and can happen in a constructive way.
- You may feel being uncomfortable with setting or enforcing limits, or worry about how the other person will react.
- The problem with avoidance is that **putting it off often allows the situation to continue** and potentially get worse.
- **Acknowledging and fixing issues in a healthy way are necessary parts of working well with others.** *Read on for some guiding principles and conversation prompts.*

Prepare your goals and talking points



- Jot down a few **key points** that are important for you to communicate. *Your language should be simple, clear, direct, and neutral.*
- The objective of the conversation is to **reach an understanding first**. *Coming armed with your solutions means the exchange has nowhere to go. #1 goal: connection.*
- Ask yourself two questions: “What is the problem?” and “What does the other person think is the problem?”
- Spend some time **reflecting on your ideal outcome for the professional relationship**. *What do you hope to accomplish during the talk? What do you want to be different for them and for you?*
- Don’t write out a full script; conversations almost never go according to plan!



Be compassionate – with boundaries

- You can deliver your talking points from a **place of empathy** in a **courageous and honest** way
- However, **don't blame yourself or make apologies.**
Stay away from language like "I feel so bad saying this" or "I'm sorry but I just feel...."
- If you aren't sure of the other person's viewpoint, **acknowledge that you don't know and ask them.**
This can be a great starting point for the actual conversation.

During the Conversation: Reflect and Learn



- Open the conversation with **gratitude and a relational goal**. *"I'm glad we have a chance to discuss this together. My hope is that we gain a greater understanding of each other."*
- To keep tensions from blazing, **slow the pace** of the conversation. **Pause and truly reflect** before responding. *"Let me reflect on what you just said for a minute."*
- Brainstorm together. *"I hear that you really want X, but that doesn't work for me because Y. Can I suggest an alternative for us?"*
- **Find common ground** and look for overlaps in your perspectives. *"I know you are very passionate about our clients and we both find a lot of satisfaction in helping others."*
- Use "I" statements; practice [active listening](#)

Some Guiding Principles and Conversation Prompts



Agree on ground rules together

- Example: no interrupting, no distractions
- Only talk about your own point of view; do not bring others and their opinions into the conversation
- Keep to the topic at hand and agree on it together
- Agree to take a break after a certain amount of time

HOW TO ASK FOR THE CONVERSATION

- *"I have something I'd like to discuss with you; I think it will help us work together more effectively."*
- *"I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view."*
- *"I need us to figure this out together. When can we talk about it?" If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," follow up with them in a few days.*
- *"I think we have different perceptions about _____. I'd like to hear your thinking on this."*
- *"I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the different opinions that came up. Can we chat about it one-on-one?"*

TOOLKIT: ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Start out by:

- Listening genuinely and with empathy
- Reflecting back/mirroring what they say: *“Here’s what I just heard from you. Do I have that right?”*
- Expressing encouragement
- Stay open-minded and non-judgmental

Continue with:

- Validating other persons feelings
- Identifying emotions being presented. *“I’m not sure what you mean. Can you please help me better understand?”*
- Making “I” statements
- Open-ended questions
- Pausing and reflecting before you reply

TOOLKIT: SCRIPTS TO PRACTICE AND USE

The following questions can be used to de-escalate challenging behavior and build rapport.

- “What do you think led up to this?”
- “What has helped you get through a difficult spot at work in the past? Do you think it could work now?”
- “I know we both want to get along better. I want to keep that goal in mind.”
- “Let’s see if we can resolve some of this together.”
- “I really want to hear your point of view. Let’s talk about it.”
- “I understand that we both feel really strongly about this.”

SCRIPTS AND QUESTIONS, CONT'D

How can you respond to their criticism or strong feelings?

- *Help clarify your position without minimizing theirs.* “From what you’ve told me, I can see how you think that you're not being heard. And it’s my perspective that part of my job is to find the bumps in our system. I don’t mean to be a critic, though perhaps I sound like one. Maybe we can talk about how to address these issues so that my intention is clear.”
- *Adopt the “Yes, and…” stance.* “I now understand that you walked away feeling isolated and lonely and blamed me. I hear you, and I also walked away from the meeting feeling unheard and dismissed.”
- *Invite the other person to explain further.* “Can you say a little more about how you see things about _____?”

Remember:
This might be tough,
but so are you.

Reach out to us at 866-660-9533 or
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