

Difficult Conversations Quick Guide

Print this and keep at your desk

BEFORE: Are You Ready?

- **Calm yourself** - 3 deep breaths, check emotions
- **Define the issue** - Specific facts, not assumptions
- **Know the impact** - How does this affect the team/work?
- **Desired outcome** - What needs to change?
- **Private space** - 30-45 min blocked off

DURING: The 5-Step Conversation

1. OPEN WITH CARE (2 min)

→ "I want to talk about something important. I'm bringing this up because I care about your success."

2. STATE THE FACTS (3-5 min)

→ Specific, objective. No "always" or "never." What did you observe?

3. EXPLAIN THE IMPACT (2-3 min)

→ "When [behavior], the impact is [consequence]."

4. LISTEN & EXPLORE (5-10 min) ← MOST IMPORTANT

→ "What's your perspective?" "Help me understand what's happening."

→ Stop talking. Pause. Don't interrupt. Ask clarifying questions.

5. AGREE ON NEXT STEPS (5 min)

→ "You'll [action] by [date]. I'll [my commitment]. We'll check in on [date]. Sound right?"

IF THEY... Quick Responses

Cry	"Take your time. Would you like a moment?" (Pause, stay calm)
Get Angry	"I see you're upset. I'm not attacking you. Can we take a breath?"
Deny	"I understand you see it differently. Let me share what I observed..."
Shut Down	"What's going through your mind right now?" (Wait, give space)
Make Excuses	"I hear you. And... the impact is still [X]. How do we move forward?"

STAY CALM: Breathe • Pause • Lower your voice • Acknowledge feelings • Reschedule if needed

AFTER: Follow Through

- Send summary email within 24 hours
- Document the conversation
- Schedule follow-up meeting
- Monitor progress & acknowledge improvements