

Difficult Conversation Planner

This resource has been created for our FLF+ Network Leadership Mentors and is provided open access so that it can be used by anyone who is interested in improving their feedback skills.

Sometimes we all have to deliver unwelcome news, or difficult feedback, and there is no easy or right way to achieve this.

Delivering your message or feedback in a way that allows you to be honest about the situation but does not damage your relationship with your colleague requires you to think through how to achieve positive outcomes. Reflecting on what has happened, what the contributing factors were, and what would be preferable and how, will help you articulate your point. You can use this template to plan the conversation.

Think about the timing, give it appropriate thought, and allow the other person time to digest the message and compose themselves for a response.

Always remember you are collaborating towards a solution that works for you both – look for the areas of alignment, the shared wins.

What do you want to achieve by having this conversation, what specific outcomes? What will be different for you if this conversation goes well? *Remind your colleague that you are talking to them honestly because you want to resolve the issue and find a better way forward.*

What outcomes might your colleague be expecting from this conversation?

Write a sentence that opens the conversation. Name the issue. State what's happening. What have you yourself observed? *Avoid hearsay, speculation, or extrapolating around the issue.*

What are the main points you want to your colleague to understand? And what firm examples or evidence could you use to support your points? *Remember to keep it to the facts, observations and examples, not what might happen, or what you imagine is the case.*



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How has this issue impacted on you, how have you been feeling?

How has this issue impacted on your colleague, acknowledge how they might be feeling?

What could their feelings, or reactions be when they hear the points you are making?

How have you personally contributed to the issue/problem/situation you find yourself in? Did you expect something different to the experience you had? Did you set expectations for your colleague? Did you let the behaviour pass previously? ***This is an important part of building a shared solution, don't skip it.***

What is your plan for moving forward, is it conditional? what specific actions do you want to take, and want your colleague to take?

Invite your colleague to respond, give them some time to think and really listen to their reply without interjecting, or justifying yourself or your thoughts.

Talk together try to reach agreement on a better way to do things.

Please remember that both you and your colleague never have to put up with bullying or harassment at work.

It's not OK for anyone to use anger, threats, force, or other manipulative means to coerce anyone else into a course of action or prevent them from speaking up.



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