

Difficult conversation planner

While preparation won't guarantee that a difficult conversation goes perfectly, it gives you a much greater chance for success. Use this worksheet to organize your thoughts and plan your approach.

Other person's name:	
Date:	
Define your objective	
What's the single most important reason for having this conversation?	
How might the conversation benefit everyone involved?	
What is the outcome I want from the conversation?	
What is the one message I want the other person to be able to repeat back to me at the end of the conversation?	
Consider all perspectives and knowledge gaps	
What feelings or opinions do I have on the situation? And what, specifically, has led me to this viewpoint?	
What information might I be missing? What do I need to learn in this conversation?	
If I were to put myself in the shoes of the other person, how might I feel? Why?	
What information might the other person be missing?	
If an objective moderator were to step in, what might he or she conclude about the situation?	
Plan your conversation roadmap	
<p>I will open the conversation in an honest, measured way by saying _____.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I'm concerned about XYZ and want to discuss it with you ...</i> • <i>I have some tough news to share ...</i> • <i>I'm curious about your perspective on XYZ and want to talk it over with you ...</i> 	

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<p>What are the main questions I want to ask and points I want to make?</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you help me understand why this is happening?</i> • <i>What ideas do you have about how to improve this in the future?</i> • <i>When you say X, it makes me uncomfortable, because ...</i> 	
<p>What, if anything, has the person done in the past to avoid, deflect, or deny this or other issues? How will I respond if it happens again?</p>	
<p>What is the best reaction I might get? And how will I respond?</p>	
<p>What is the worst reaction I might get? And how will I respond?</p>	
<p>I will close the conversation in a proactive way by saying _____.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Thanks for talking this through. It sounds like we're in agreement that you'll do X and I'll do Y."</i> • <i>"I'll send an email recapping what we've both agreed to, and then let's touch base again on DATE."</i> 	
<p>Don't let preparation become procrastination</p>	
<p>I commit to having this conversation by _____.</p>	