



# Having Difficult Conversations

*Difficult conversations are going to happen. They are never easy. But, preparation can help make these conversations a little less painful and a lot more productive.*

## Quick Tips to Make a Difficult Conversation Less Difficult

### Plan the conversation

Prepare for a face-to-face conversation. It's the best option when having a difficult conversation about performance issues or sensitive topics. An outline of your key talking points will help keep you on track and on topic. Be informed and prepared. For example, read previous performance reviews and bring documentation to the meeting.

### Be direct and specific

Use facts and observations, not opinions. Start conversations with "I've noticed that..." or "I sense that..."

### Have an open mind

Listen carefully to whatever comes your way. Confirm you understand the other person's viewpoint fully by inquiring, "Tell me more about that." Put yourself in the other person's shoes and consider their perspective.

### Make it job-related

It's business. Not personal. Keep it job related. Be sure to manage your emotions if the outcome doesn't go your way.

### Offer and ask for solutions

If you're breaking bad news, you've got to be prepared. Offer a viable alternative solution or ideas for how to overcome the setback. Provide information and data that supports your alternative solution or ideas. Keep an open mind and have a two-way discussion.

### Gain commitment

Whatever the result, keep up your end of the bargain. Make sure you allow (and encourage) the other person to ask questions. Collaboration is key!