



10 Top Tips for Difficult Conversations



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Dread the thought of having a difficult conversation? Do you do everything you can to avoid it? If yes, then you are not alone. However, putting off a difficult conversation is only going to make things worse in the long run. This guide will give you some top tips to consider when dealing with those dreaded difficult conversations.

1	Venue	Give it some thought - if you do not want it to be confrontational perhaps a walk and talk may be best.
2	Time	Never rush - always allow plenty of time.
3	Communication	Understand your communication style and adapt it to fit the person you are dealing with.
4	Listen	It's the magic bullet! Be prepared to be surprised. Listen to understand not to reply. Don't think about how you're going to reply when another person is talking.
5	Focus	Always focus on the issue and not the person.
6	Patience	Become comfortable with silence and never interrupt. The word listen and the word silent are spelled with the same letters.
7	Questions	The key to a good conversation is good quality open questions. Open questions begin with words such as: what, why, how and describe. Avoid questions that can be answered with yes, no or another single word (closed questions).
8	Appreciation	Show appreciation - it keeps people thinking. Even when dealing with an issue of poor performance or misconduct; start by telling them what you appreciate about their contributions and what they do well.
9	Discussion	Allow others to express their feelings. Never try to shut them down or belittle them. Acknowledge and respond to their feelings. Never tell someone they are being silly, dramatic, or that they should calm down. Acknowledge the emotions they are experiencing and respond with kindness and empathy.
10	Conclusion	Ensure clarity of action at the end so there are no misunderstandings.



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