

TIPS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

PREPARATION TIPS

1. Have a vision. Visualize your desired outcome before you begin.
2. Write down what you will say
 - a. Situation – Behavior – Impact Model
 - b. Hard to think on your feet
3. Ask “what is the worst that could happen?” How would you handle it? How will you respond?
4. Choose the right time.
5. Schedule a time and let the other person know what you want to talk about.

IMPLEMENTATION TIPS

1. Absorb their energy.
2. Use “I” statements instead of you statements.
 - a. When I...
 - b. I feel...
 - c. My concern is...
3. Tense interaction? Let the other side vent frustration, blow off steam, but don’t react directly. Listen. Nod.
4. Ask clarifying questions.
5. Don’t reject a frigid position; ask what is behind the position.
6. Maintain a calm and open body language. Don’t react.
7. Ask open-ended questions:
 - a. Why is this particularly bothersome to you?
 - b. What could I do to help?
 - c. So you think I need to...
8. Restate positions to signal you are listening.
9. Acknowledge emotions:
 - a. “I can see this is important to you.”
10. Don’t go on autopilot. Be aware of how you’re communicating to yourself and others.
11. Be direct but tactful. Speak the truth.
12. Have empathy, consider how the situation affects the other person.
 - a. Balance empathy with firmness.
13. Focus on the behavior, not the person.
14. Focus on solutions, not blame.