

Difficult Conversation Format

1. Opening Statement

“ I want to talk to you about”

- Provide a succinct statement about the general subject related to the conflict

2. Observation

“ I observed.....”

- Describe the behaviour
- Give the details without judgement-oriented or shaming statements
- If you felt a strong emotion use this as information and relay only the information not the emotion.
 - For instance, if you were angry, the discussion concerns boundaries.
 - If you were frustrated, the subject involves a block that needs to be worked through.
 - If you were afraid, then address issues around safety.
 - If you felt vulnerable, this involves change, experimentation, making mistakes, or having your own beliefs and habits questioned. The later likely includes your heightened response to some personal issues or blind spots being revealed.
- Make sure you address with the person only what is related to the current situation or circumstance. If required seek help from someone to address your personal issues if you feel overwhelmed by them

3. Impact

“The impact is...”

- Describe the impact this behaviour has on your relationship and the potential outcome of the situation in which the behaviour occurred
- Leave out any references to the past and deal only with the current situation

4. Request

“In future, I would like you to, or it would be helpful to...”

- Describe how to improve the behaviour
- Be specific about what behaviour you would like to see, if a similar situation arises in the future
- Be sure to give positive feedback if necessary e.g. “thank you for taking the time to listen to me, I really appreciate it” or on the other hand “you’re doing a great job with....”

Be sure to refer to the emotional message chart to work through any strong emotions before you have the conversation. You may have to write down your feelings until you are able to get the message behind the emotions and be clear what you are feeling.

It is also wise to utilise the body scan in relation to any emotions that come up and the sensations that come with them in your body. Use the body scan before you go into the conversation with the individual to get any relevant information from your body. This will allow you to be more present while the conversation is taking place.

It may also be helpful to find someone to practise the conversation with beforehand, who will give you valuable non-judgemental feedback. Make sure it is someone who you trust to express your feelings with and who won't use your vulnerabilities against you.