



## 10 Ways to Deal with Having Tough Conversations

Delivering unpleasant news, correcting misunderstandings, confronting a friend or family member, and dealing with hard-to-talk-about issues are the kinds of tough conversations most of us dread. They're a part of life though, and we can't avoid them. Instead of getting stressed, get knowledgeable!

Here are 10 things you can do to help make your essential conversation productive and painless, even if you might never be 100 per cent comfortable. You'll get the best outcome when you handle things calmly and respectfully. Practice makes perfect!

- 1. Choose the right time and place.** If you're initiating the conversation, be mindful not to hold the conversation when the other party is upset or angry. Respect the other person: make the place a private one to reduce the chance of being overheard. Whenever possible, have these conversations face-to-face, or at least by phone. Email is a no-no!
- 2. Anticipate that you might not be on the same page.** Differences in how we look at things are usually at the root of all sensitive conversations. When you begin with this in mind, you won't be surprised when the deep-down stuff comes up! Remember, what may be logical to you may not be logical to others.
- 3. Use a respectful tone.** The tone in which you communicate is as important as what you say. Speak calmly with kindness and respect. Your tone should reflect your willingness for a good outcome which increases the likelihood that your message will land in the way you intend it to.
- 4. Genuinely desire a win-win outcome.** If you begin the conversation with intent to win the other person over, you'll often be disappointed. Instead, aim for a compromise or resolution that satisfies your goal and the needs of the other person.
- 5. Be empathetic.** Ask questions to try to understand the point of view, and emotional state, of the other person. Showing genuine interest and understanding will get a better outcome and help you make the best decisions in how to approach things.
- 6. Maintain eye contact.** In face-to-face communication, maintaining eye contact helps you gauge where the other person is at, throughout the conversation, and shows your honest desire to listen.
- 7. Stay in control.** If you express anger, it is natural for the other person to respond accordingly to match your emotional state. Do whatever it takes and stay calm!
- 8. Write it out.** It's helpful to put the details of the situation in writing, and include what you'd like to achieve for both parties; consider all views and subtleties of the situation. Taking the time to properly prepare for any important conversation will be sure to get you the best results.
- 9. Don't interrupt.** When the other person's speaking, never interrupt! Show the other person the respect you want to be shown when you are talking. And, don't be anxious to respond. People who can't wait to speak generally aren't listening because they're so focused on what they want to say.
- 10. Don't team up.** Avoid saying things like, "I've heard about this from lots of people." If there's an issue that needs to be addressed, and it's so serious that you need to bring others into the discussion, make sure they're present.

\*This lesson is intended for the type of issues that most of us have to face from time to time. If you are dealing with a serious situation, seek the help from a trained professional.