

Difficult Conversation Worksheet

Preparing for a difficult conversation is the key to success. Take time to think and write out your answers to gain insight and move through conflict.

Person you want to talk with: _____

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

What is the problem from your perspective: _____

What does this make you think and feel? About the situation, the other person and yourself?

How do you think the other person would describe the problem? If you don't think they would see it as a problem, how do you think they would respond to you if you raised it? What would they say? What would their reasons be for behaving or doing what it is troubling you?

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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Is there anything going on now or that has happened in the past that might be contributing to your feelings about this situation?

Is there any past history or something more recent that may be contributing to the other person's behavior?

If this is an on-going problem, what is the trigger? What happens at the time that really pushes your buttons?

Have you ever had a similar reaction to this trigger? If so, when and why?

Can you identify anything that triggers the other person to behave this way?

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HAVING THE CONVERSATION

Imagine talking to this person about the problem. When and where would you likely have the most success? Be specific--time of day, location, etc.

Are they likely to be more receptive if you *schedule the meeting* or *spring it on them*?

Having thought about this thoroughly, frame what you want to say in the following way:

When you _____
(name a specific behavior)

I feel _____
(be sure to use an emotion, not a judgement)

Because _____
(name the impact the behavior has on you)

Here's an example to get you started: When you leave dirty dishes in the sink, I feel angry because I have to clean them to make room in the sink to clean my own.

Framing the conversation in this way keeps it concrete and about a behavior and its impact on you--NOT the person and their character defects.

Prepare and practice:

How will the other person react when you say this? _____

How will you feel like responding ? _____

How will you actually respond? _____

Try to stick to your script! The other person will be defensive and you have some insight about this now, so listen and reflect what you hear with empathy. Then be prepared to repeat "when you..., I feel..., because..." at least three times before they take some responsibility. When they do, immediately move toward problem solving.

Remember: Don't worry about what other people think--it's none of their business!