



Difficult Conversations



acaciaEAP
employee assistance program

We have all felt the discomfort of having difficult conversations. It's not something that any of us particularly look forward to, but we understand that it's sometimes simply unavoidable.

In order to make the process as seamless and stress-free as possible, there are a number of things that we can do to prepare ourselves and ensure that the process runs as smoothly and considerately as possible.

The Importance of Preparation

The most important step is to make sure that you are prepared for the conversation. This can mean having all the relevant information and other notes that you may require, but also can mean being mentally prepared.

Difficult conversations may cause anxiety or stress, as we can't always predict the outcome or the way that an individual will respond. Engaging in some positive self-talk and having someone ready to debrief with afterwards can be incredibly helpful.

Setting the Right Environment

Next, you will want to consider the environment in which you are having a difficult conversation. If possible, try to have the conversation in person, so that you can read the other person's body language.

This allows you to adequately assess another's tone and state of mind and enables you to keep an eye out for discomfort.

Be aware of your own body language as well as this is unspoken language that can send a very important message. Having your arms crossed and your body facing away from people when you speak conveys being closed off and disinterested. Facing others with your hands resting on your lap or the table in front of you will convey openness and attentiveness.

You will also want to ensure that this is a quiet space where there are little to no distractions. This shows the other person that you are giving them your full attention and you are fully present with them.

Post-Conversation Check-in

At the end of the conversation, check in with the other person to see how they are feeling. You may want to take a moment to ensure they have understood the message you are trying to convey or the action you are asking of them.

Difficult conversations may also lead to hurt feelings or distress for the other person. Asking them if they require any additional support or if there is anything that you can do to assist them may help ease any anxiety or uneasiness.

Dealing with the Aftermath

Finally, it's important to recognise that sometimes difficult conversations may lead to tension or awkwardness between the two of you. This may be temporary and dissipate over time, or you may find that the relationship simply cannot be repaired.

In this instance, it is important to remind yourself that the conversation needed to be had. Take steps to look after your mental health to make sure that you are not sitting with any feelings of guilt or regret.

Final Words

Difficult conversations are often important, but can make many of us feel stressed or anxious. By approaching difficult conversations with tact and understanding, you pave the way for stronger relationships, both personally and professionally.

If you need further support in having a difficult conversation, remember that you are not alone. Acacia and our team of highly experienced professionals are here to support you 24/7.

