

Difficult Conversation Planner

Use this before a conversation that matters. The aim is not to script every sentence. It is to understand your needs clearly enough to communicate them with respect.

1. What happened?

Describe the situation using observable facts rather than assumptions about the other person's motives.

2. What did it bring up for you?

What did you feel, and what mattered underneath that feeling?

3. What do you need the other person to understand?

If they remembered only one thing from the conversation, what should it be?

4. What are you asking for?

Make the request specific and realistic. What would “better” look like in behaviour, not just intention?

5. What are you willing to hear?

What might their perspective be, even if you do not agree with it?

6. What boundary matters?

What will you do if the situation does not change? A boundary describes your own action, not a punishment for someone else.

A simple structure you can use

- 1 Start with the specific situation: “I wanted to talk about what happened when...”
- 2 Describe your experience without presenting it as the only possible truth.
- 3 Say what matters to you and what you need.
- 4 Make a clear request.
- 5 Pause and listen to the response.
- 6 If emotions rise, slow the conversation rather than trying to win it.

The goal of a difficult conversation is not always agreement. Sometimes success is clarity, respect and a better understanding of what happens next.

Important: This resource provides general wellbeing and self-development information. It is not medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, and it is not a substitute for professional or emergency support. If you are concerned about your mental or physical health, contact an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.