

How to Navigate Difficult Conversations



Don't wait!

Address conflict immediately

- Ignoring the issue can make it worse.
- If you need time to gather information, schedule a meeting to discuss the issue.
- If emotions are heightened, give the employee time to calm down before speaking with them.

Plan ahead

- **Make sure you have all of the information before talking to the employee.**
- **Whenever possible, plan what you're going to say and how you're going to say it.**
- **Prepare your notes with specific examples.**

Identify the problem

- Clearly state the issue at hand and explain **why** it's a concern.
- Summarize the main points of conflict in a neutral way, clearly and calmly.
- Be objective and focus on the facts.
- Give the employee a chance to explain their side of the story.



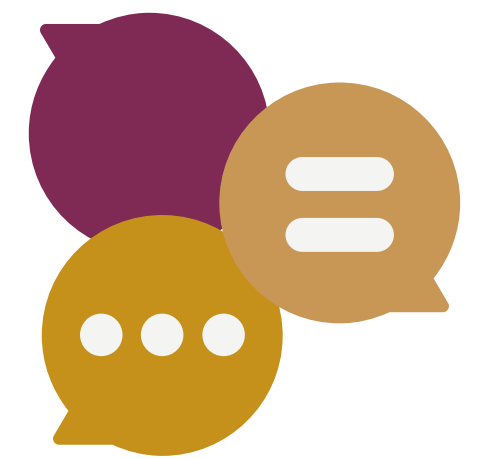
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Practice active listening

- Give your full attention by listening with all 5 senses.
- Don't interrupt!
- Ask questions to make sure you understand.
- Repeat what was communicated to you in your own words to show that you heard and understood the employee's perspective.

Review policies & procedures

- **State specific rules, policies or procedures that apply to the conflict.**
- **Discuss why the conflict relates to the policies and procedures.**
- **Review expectations related to policies, procedures and code of conduct.**
- **Give the employee a copy of relevant policies and procedures to take with them.**

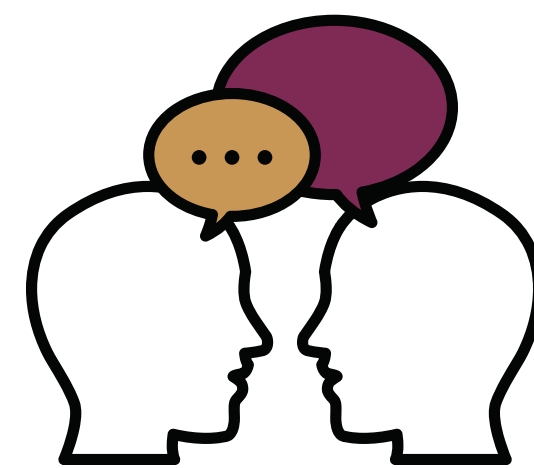
Manage your emotions

- Others are more likely to stay calm if you do.
- Be empathetic - empathy builds trust and openness with employees.
- Avoid negative language that may be perceived as hostile.



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Make a plan of action

- Come up with a solution to resolve the conflict.
- Include the employee in the solution.
 - Ask for their feedback.
 - Be flexible and open to their suggestions.
- Agree on actionable steps towards resolution.
- Give the employee an opportunity to demonstrate change.
- If necessary, write down the plan of action and give the employee a copy.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to review progress (if applicable).

Make it a learning experience

- **Difficult conversations are a great opportunity for growth for you and the employee.**
- **Provide resources like training tools, supports or mentorship to help them improve.**
- **Follow up with your employee to show that you're committed to their development.**
- **Use this as an opportunity to provide constructive feedback.**



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