

# Dealing with Difficult Conversations

There comes a time when we have to have tough conversations with people. The kind of conversation where you have to share some honest truths that the other person may not want to hear. That other person can be a business partner, a team member, a patient or a member of your family.

There's a tried and tested way to increase the odds that the conversation will go as smoothly as possible.

## STEP 1 PERMISSION

It's appropriate to start the conversation with:

“Do I have permission to have a very direct conversation with you?”

If the answer is “NO”, then rearrange. If “YES” then proceed.

## STEP 2 PERCEPTION

Remember that you may not always be right.

“My perception is that the following is the situation...”

By stating that this is a perception, you are giving the other party the opportunity to put you right if you have your facts wrong.

## STEP 3 FEELINGS

Make the conversation about how you feel - not about what you think of the other person.

“The way that is making me feel is...”

## STEP 4 CHANGE

Be very specific about what you want the outcome of the conversation to be.

“So what I'd like to change about the situation going forward is...”

This approach is not guaranteed to work but it will reduce the risk of the conversation becoming emotionally charged and, thus, less constructive.