

Tip Sheet

Difficult Conversations

TIPS

Think Before You Act

When we leave things off too long eventually something will trigger a quick reaction. Make sure to stop and think before you act. Don't talk to someone when you're angry. Difficult conversations should have minimal emotions involved, unless it is a case that requires some empathy.

Privacy and Patience

Publicly shaming employees isn't ever the right approach. Always have tough conversations privately. Set aside sufficient time for discussion and turn off your phone and notifications to make sure you are giving the employee your full attention.

Rip Off the Band Aide

Once you've taken a BIT of time (not 2 weeks) to think it through and plan what to say, then act. Avoiding just makes things worse. Obviously the behavior is impacting the workplace and employees can see this. When employees [notice you aren't addressing an issue](#) it reflects on your credibility as a manager. So don't [procrastinate](#) - Rip Off the Band Aide. You know it's going to be uncomfortable but it will be over quickly and the anticipation is worse than the actual act.

Focus on Behavior and Impact

Plan how you want to start the conversation. I suggest writing it down because it's easier to make sure you focus on saying the right thing and omit words that are negative. Focus on the specific behavior or requirement and the impact, rather than making it personal.

Refer to the [article](#) for specific examples.

Express Genuine Intent

Let the employee know that you're genuinely interested in helping them. The point of the conversation is so they understand your expectations, understand the impact, and are clear on what needs to change. You're having the conversation with them because they are important and their success is important and you care enough to want to help them reach their full potential.

W-A-I-T

Let them talk! Sometimes people need a few minutes to digest what you're saying to them. Don't jump in and fill the silence. Think about WAIT - Why am I Talking? You need the employee's input and agreement in order to move forward so make sure you get that. It's okay if they get a little angry or upset. Hear them out and have a conversation because that's much better than having someone walk away in silence and you have no idea how they feel.

Check for Understanding and Action

Often, we want to get the conversation over as quickly as possible. Don't rush the discussion. Are you confident the employee completely understood and agreed to change or modify a behavior? If you've had a good discussion and the employee is engaged and responsive, great. However, this isn't always the case. How do you proceed now?

Ask open questions. [Refer to the article](#) for samples of open questions.





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