

Managing Difficult Conversations

Worksheet For Supervisors

This handout was created with content contributed by Derek Ekaitis, Staff Relations Manager at Clemson University, and Reese Viglione, Human Resources Strategic Partner at Pennsylvania State University.

Prepare for the Conversation by Answering Key Questions

What incident, concern or behavior has prompted the need for a conversation?

What factors might need to be considered?

Has the issue, concern or behavior occurred or been addressed previously?

What is the desired outcome or goal of the conversation?



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What resources, if any, are available to help support the desired outcome?

Some Tips for Ensuring a Productive Conversation*

**Note: for those in a unionized environment, make sure to review any agreements, requirements or other rights that may be relevant to the situation at hand. If unsure, consult your organization's legal counsel before proceeding with the conversation.*

DO

- Consult your Human Resources Department for advice or assistance
- Schedule the meeting ahead of time – this allows everyone involved to properly prepare
- Hold the meeting in a quiet and private space
- Focus on objective observations when describing the situation
- Be ready to offer strategies, solutions and resources that can help improve the situation
- Allow space in the conversation for those involved to express their perspectives
- Work collaboratively to find a solution
- Document the conversation appropriately
- Set a time to follow-up and check in – is the situation resolving as expected?

DON'T

- Allow emotions to get out of hand – everyone should remain professional
- Interrupt or allow others to interrupt
- Jump to conclusions or make assumptions
- Share any confidential or personal details from other conversations
- Ask leading questions
- Ask questions that may violate the ADA or otherwise be construed as discrimination
- Make promises or provide answers or information you are not sure of – you can always bring this to the follow-up after you've had time to confirm with any relevant parties.



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