

Conversations we dread

1. Look at the types of conversation in the boxes and discuss the questions.

quitting your job

firing someone

admitting failure to someone

dealing with a very upset customer

refusing to lend money to someone

confronting a friend about their behaviour

negotiating terms of a contract

- Which of the conversations in the boxes would you consider difficult? Why?
- Would it be easier for you to have these conversations in your first language rather than in English? Why/Why not?
- What advice would you give to someone who finds these types of conversations difficult?
- Which of the conversations in the boxes have you had? Choose one and share some details (how easy or difficult it was, what the outcome was, etc.)

2. Complete each pair of sentences with a word in the box in the correct form.

defuse

hijack

stabilize

untangle

validate

wrench

- a) You need to your emotions from the subject matter.
I tried to the cables on the floor.
- b) I got by my emotions and overreacted to her words.
The aircraft has been We've alerted the authorities.
- c) She didn't feel by her family because they overlooked her efforts.
The theory has been by experimental results.
- d) I'm having trouble my thoughts after the call.
Water also provides the means of body temperature.
- e) She cracked a joke to tension.
The road was closed while the police tried to the bomb.
- f) It was a gut-..... experience.
They tried to the bag from him but he managed to keep it.

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3. Look at the first statement in each pair in ex. 2 and say what might have happened in the lead up to them being said.

EXAMPLE: a) You need to untangle your emotions from the subject matter.
Someone had a heated argument with a partner about their financial problems. They ended up saying things they didn't mean.

4. You are going to watch a video about having difficult conversations. Before you watch it, think of two ways to achieve the things below during a difficult conversation.

EXAMPLE: stabilize your thoughts – *go for a walk*

- stabilize your thoughts
- validate the other person's emotions
- defuse tension
- not get hijacked by your emotions

5. Complete the sentences with your own ideas. Then, watch the [video](https://youtu.be/TQ48GVMfvMg) [https://youtu.be/TQ48GVMfvMg] and compare your ideas to the speaker's.

- a) It's important to acknowledge responsibility at the beginning of a difficult conversation because
- b) The reason you need a defined outcome before the conversation starts is
.....
- c) It's a very powerful thing to validate what the other person is saying because
.....
- d) The two most important things to remember during a difficult conversation are
.....

6. Discuss the questions.

- Which of the tips from the video do you find useful?
 - acknowledge your responsibility
 - define the outcome and restate it throughout the conversation
 - listen and validate
 - rehearse with a friend



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- Which of the tips is the most difficult to apply?
- “Difficult conversations come down to the ability to separate your emotions about having it from the things you need to talk about and the outcome that you want to achieve.” – Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- “There is an epidemic right now of people that are unwilling to have uncomfortable conversations.” – Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- “67% of managers are uncomfortable talking to the people they manage.” Is the statistic surprising for you? Why/Why not?
- How can the language we use in difficult conversations affect their outcome? Give examples.

7. Choose two suitable options to complete each sentence.

- a) If there is anything you want to add at any point, feel free to
1) kick in 2) chime in 3) intercept 4) interject
- b) In the spirit of ..., I must admit that I've been feeling quite overwhelmed lately.
1) impartiality 2) transparency 3) full disclosure 4) sensibility
- c) I feel like my feelings are not being ..., which is making me feel undervalued in our relationship.
1) validated 2) defused 3) acknowledged 4) identified
- d) To put it ..., your daughter has been causing some issues this semester.
1) gently 2) mildly 3) neutrally 4) sufficiently
- e) I ... where you're coming from. My marriage fell apart, too.
1) notice 2) honour 3) see 4) know
- f) I know you might be mad at me right now, but ..., I think that you are an amazing artist and there is an exciting career ahead of you.
1) for what it's worth 3) as a consolation prize
2) to my liking 4) just so you know
- g) We need to Otherwise, I honestly don't see a future for our friendship.
1) find the middle ground 3) be halfway through
2) meet halfway 4) untangle equally
- h) ..., I've been struggling with workload and could use some support.
1) With honesty 3) Being brutally honest
2) If I'm being honest 4) In all honesty

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8. Decide what you might say in the situations below. Use one of the words or phrases in brackets.

EXAMPLE: You told your roommate that you are moving out and they got upset. (middle ground, it's worth, chime)

For what it's worth, I really enjoyed us living together.

- a) You've been negotiating a contract with a customer and feel like you have offered a lot but they haven't been very flexible. (all honesty, disclosure, meet halfway)
- b) You and your family went on a camping trip. Your dog broke a leg, your car was stolen and your tent leaked. A friend has now asked you how the trip went. (interject, mildly, in the spirit of)
- c) Communicate to a colleague that the strategy she presented might not work. (being honest, middle ground, acknowledge)
- d) You want to let a friend know that you understand why they quit their job. (just so, in the spirit of, coming from)
- e) You got angry because your friend bailed on you again. He told you not to overreact. (transparency, gently, validate)
- f) Your partner has been talking about a problem they have at work. You want to interrupt them to ask about a detail. (gently, chime, acknowledge)
- g) You are going to quit your job. You weren't going to tell your boss until the end of the month but she has now asked you to participate in a big project. Tell her you are quitting. (disclosure, middle ground, it's worth)

9. You are going to role play some difficult conversations. Before you start each role play, choose three phrases in the box that you are going to use.

feel free to chime in / feel free to interject
in the spirit of transparency / in the spirit of full disclosure
acknowledge someone's feelings / validate someone's feelings
to put it mildly / to put it gently
I see where you're coming from / I know where you're coming from
for what it's worth / just so you know
find the middle ground / meet halfway
if I'm being honest / in all honesty