



# Practice Makes Perfect

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**Instructions:** This worksheet contains a scripted conversation. Read through it a couple of times to get a sense for the story. As you do, consider each person in the story and their perspective.

Once you've read it through, read it out loud as both the Boss and John, or add a partner and each of you practice each role. This will give you a chance to focus on your delivery (e.g. tone and pacing) and empathy as you begin to better understand each person and their perspective.


When you've finished, review the debrief and debrief section.

**Extra-** Record your voice or body for extra review of your body language and delivery.

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**Boss:** Hello, John. I wanted to speak with you regarding your performance and attitude at work. I've noticed a consistent pattern of negative behavior, which is impacting the team's morale and overall productivity. Can we discuss this matter?

**John:** Sure, I didn't realize my behavior was causing such problems!?



**Boss:** Thank you for being open to discuss. I'd like to start by saying that the intent of this conversation isn't to make you feel uncomfortable or like you're a terrible employee. As part of my role, I try to be aware of how the team is functioning, not just in their work, but as a whole.

So I wanted to have this conversation to help me fill in the gaps and figure out how we can work together toward addressing these concerns, does that work for you?


**John:** Yeah, I guess...

**Boss:** The behaviors I'd like to address are related to frequent angry outbursts in your cubicle area that seem to be getting worse recently and what I perceive to be negative comments made under your breath during team meetings.

I know you just said that you weren't aware that there was any reason for concern so take a moment to process and let me know what your thoughts are on these two things when you're ready.

**John:** I don't know, I mean... I just like to let off steam when I'm angry or frustrated. I don't always agree with responses from co-workers or clients and it just builds up. I didn't realize that was so wrong?

**Boss:** There's nothing wrong with getting upset about natural work irritations that come along with being part of a larger organization with lots of people from different backgrounds, especially when a lot of that communication is over e-mail.



**Boss:** What I would like to focus on there is *how* that frustration is handled. Aside from a loud outburst when you are feeling upset, what are some other possible alternatives that could work for you?

**John:** I don't know... I guess I could just try to step away?!

**Boss:** Sure, removing yourself from the situation to get your mind off of it, or to mull it over, can be helpful. Since I know your schedule can be fairly busy, what other technique might help if you're unable to step away?

**John:** hmmm... I'm not sure..


**Boss:** What about a reminder telling you to breathe, a stress ball, or something that you can always look at that brings you joy, like a picture of something meaningful in your life or some sort of token?

**John:** Yeah, I guess I could try those things.

**Boss:** Thanks for being open to trying them. I'd also like to hear your thoughts about what I perceive to be negative comments under your breath during meetings.

**John:** Oh, I don't know, I guess I'll just try to stop doing it, or whatever.

**Boss:** Never stop voicing your concerns. We spend a lot of time at work and nothing in life is perfect, but we can never address something if we don't know the issue. I feel as though when we make those side comments it means you're at a point where something doesn't quite agree.



**Boss:** May I ask that you still have those thoughts, but also channel them in a different way? For example, speak on it, but also try and keep it as civil as possible in how you deliver it. If you feel it may impact others, then make note of it and bring it to your one-on-one, does that work for you?

**John:** Yeah, I can try to do that. Sorry that you had to call me in here.


**Boss:** You're welcome, John and there is nothing to be sorry about. I appreciate you taking the time to talk through these items and come up with some ways to move forward. Let me know if you have any other questions, or need any support. Also, Let's schedule some check-ins to see how things are going for you. Sound good?

**John:** Yeah, and thanks.

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### Questions:

1. What did you think about this conversation? What went well? What could've been improved?
2. How would you have responded?
3. What sort of pace or tone would you think is important to use for a conversation like this?



4. What could you prepare for to help you keep an even tone (e.g. their behavior or your anxiety)?

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**Debrief:** What are some of your biggest takeaways from this exercise? How will this help you to have better work through challenging conversations in the future?

One of the many ways we can promote a safe and open environment during a difficult conversation is to remain calm and be aware of your body language and how you are delivering the message. These sort of considerations can help to put the other person at ease and show them that you care.