



# Exit Strategies

In many situations, a well planned and executed conversation results in a helpful, clarifying conversation. However, in a few situations, it may turn into something you are not prepared for. This could be because the other person is defensive and is no longer able to engage constructively or it could be that they have said or done something that has resulted in you being defensive and you are not sure of the best way to respond. If either you or the other person are struggling, the best strategy is to end this initial attempt and set the stage for another attempt.

These 'exit strategies' need to be short and focused, as an upset person will find it difficult to track or absorb longer statements. To get out of these situations respectfully, it is important to communicate three things clearly and concisely:

## **1. Your need to end the conversation at this time**

You need to take initiative and take responsibility for ending the conversation.

## **2. Your reason for ending the conversation (state your intent)**

It is important for you to own your decision rather than blaming the other person. To say, "I can see you cannot carry on," is likely to further upset the other party and possibly even cause them to argue with you.

## **3. Your commitment to carry on the conversation at a later time**

You also need to clearly tell the other person that you will set up another time to meet in the next day or two to finish the conversation.

### **An example exit strategy:**

"Pat, I am going to pause this conversation here and pick it up in the next day or two. I need time to think about some of the things you have said before we continue." OR "Pat, I am feeling a little surprised and not at my best. So, let's pick up this conversation after I have had a night to think about some of things you have said to me. I am sure that we can work this out in a way that works for both of us."