



Difficult Conversation Planner



While preparation won't guarantee that a difficult conversation goes perfectly, it gives you much greater chance for success. Use this worksheet to organize your thoughts and plan your approach.

Team Member's Name:	
Date:	

Define Your Objective

What's the single most important reason for having this conversation?	
How might the conversation benefit everyone involved?	
What is the outcome I want from the conversation?	
What is the one message I want the other person to be able to repeat back to me at the end of the conversation?	

Consider All Perspectives and Knowledge Gaps

What feelings or opinions do I have on the situation? And what, specifically, has led me to this viewpoint?	
What information might I be missing? What do I need to learn in this conversation?	
If I were to put myself in the shoes of the other person, how might I feel? Why?	
What information might the other person be missing?	
If an objective moderator were to step in, what might he or she conclude about the situation?	



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Plan Your Conversation Roadmap

I will open the conversation in an honest, measured way by saying _____.

Examples:

- *I'm concerned about XYZ and want to discuss it with you...*
- *I have some tough news to share...*
- *I'm curious about your perspective on XYZ and want to talk it over with you...*

What are the main questions I want to ask and point I want to make?

Examples:

- *Can you help me understand why this is happening?*
- *What ideas do you have about how to improve this in the future?*
- *When you say/do X, it concerns me because...*

What, if anything, has the person done in the past to avoid, deflect, or deny this or other issues? How will I respond if it happens again?

What is the best reaction I might get? And how will I respond?

What is the worst reaction I might get? And how will I respond?

I will close the conversation in a proactive way by saying _____.

Examples:

- *Thanks for talking this through. It sounds like we're in agreement that you'll do X and I'll do Y.*
- *I'll send an email recapping what we've both agreed to, and then let's touch base again on DATE.*

Don't Let Preparation Become Procrastination

I commit to having this conversation by _____.