

Name:

Communication for Difficult Conversations



Learning to communicate effectively can lessen your anxiety. Follow the prompts below to prepare for difficult conversations.

1. Soft Start-Up: For example: “I would like to talk to you about something that might be unexpected. Will you hear me out before responding?” Write a softened start-up below to initiate the conversation.

Your response:

2. Use ‘I’ Messages: Begin your statements with the word I to take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings – avoid saying ‘you...’

For example, “I would like to take the lead on the XYZ account. Although others on the team have more experience, I believe that I am ready for this responsibility. Here is what I have to offer...” Write some ‘I’ messages that express your thoughts and feelings below.

Your response:

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3. Be Direct: As in the example above state exactly how you feel or ask directly for what you want. Avoid using exaggerations or minimizers such as; 'extremely' and 'a little'. Also, be aware to avoid passive or passive-aggressive communication. For example, "What would you think about my taking the lead on the XYZ account?"

4. Paraphrase Active listening is a key element of healthy communication. But to ensure that you have heard what the other person said and that you understand his/her point paraphrase it in your own words. For example "If I understand you correctly, your concern is that I already have too much to do and would not be able to commit enough time to the project." This allows the other person to clarify any misunderstandings.

5. Be Prepared to Negotiate: For example, "I am confident that I can handle the new project. I will be finished with the ABC project in two days. I would like to begin the new project at that time. If needed, I can delegate some of the tasks to others on the team." List some key points for your discussion below. Remember to still follow Steps 1 through 4 when negotiating.

Your response: