

Strategic Planning for Difficult Conversations

1. Don't plunge into difficult conversations!

- Never engage in the heat of the moment.
- Wait for the right time.
- Be constructive and helpful.
- Try to accentuate some positives.

2. Be aware of your state of mind.

- Make sure you are relaxed and calm.

3. Begin with a question.

- Try to ascertain where the other person stands on the issue.
- Learn about the other's views.
- Don't make assumptions about the views of the other person.

4. Focus on listening.

- Listen more and talk less.
- Be gentle, kind, and compassionate.
- Clarify your understanding by framing and repeating.
- Allow the other person to express emotion, but stay calm yourself.
- Don't say, "You are overreacting," "Don't feel sad," etc.

5. Acknowledge the other person's strengths.

- Begin with a compliment.
- Keep the intensity low and be civil.

6. Be clear in your purpose and goals.

- What is the aim of the conversation?
- Prepare: Write down your goals.
- What is a satisfactory outcome?
- Stay on track.