

Initiating & Facilitating Difficult Conversations

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FULL TEXT

When it comes time to deliver difficult or sensitive information, it is good to be candid and truthful. However, that isn't always enough. Consider the following when initiating and facilitating difficult conversations:

Empathize. Take the time to think about what YOU would want to hear in a similar situation. Imagine what it might be like to receive the difficult information you are about to share.

Manage your emotions. Regardless of the message you are delivering, emotions can easily become charged. The key is to keep your emotions in check.

Be solution-oriented. Don't criticize or give negative feedback without offering a potential remedy to improve the situation.

Have a strategy. Going into a difficult conversation with-out a "strategy" is dangerous. Identifying your larger goals and the main message you want to get across are keys to staying focused.

Use open-ended questions. Identify 2-3 open-ended questions when facilitating to get the other person talking. The key is not to lecture or do all the talking.

Use real life examples. Use concrete, specific and real-life examples to paint a clearer picture of how you see the situation. Don't assume the other person understands just because you understand.

Don't avoid difficult conversations. There is a price to pay when you don't confront difficult conversations. One of my favorite quotes is: "You can't change what you refuse to confront." Some of my clients claim they are too "nice" to engage in difficult conversations. But the consequences are real when a leader practices avoidance.

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