**MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS – PLANNING TOOL FOR MANAGERS**

In general we would rather avoid difficult conversations and the thought of having the conversation is usually scarier than the conversation itself. Use the tips below to help prepare for having a difficult conversation.

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| 1. **Prepare to be open, direct and clear**
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| Before you have a difficult conversation, take the time to prepare so that you can be direct about the subject in hand and be honest about your own and others’ emotional states.  |
| 1. **Prepare the context of the conversation**
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| Think carefully about where to meet and the message this sends. Acknowledge that this conversation may have difficult points – so prepare thoroughly and give this the same time and thought as you would preparing an exam paper, an interview or viva. Make clear in your invitation that you wish to have a conversation; state your intent to seek to resolve the issue and work or think together to move things along, rather than simply discuss it. |
| 1. **Prepare your state of mind**
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| The thought of a difficult conversation can make us feel agitated and tense. Be aware of these feelings, recognise them and take time out before the conversation to quiet your mind so you can think clearly and be less emotionally reactive during the conversation.  |
| 1. **Prepare what you want to say**
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| Think in advance about what you want to say. Prepare to recognise that this is a difficult conversation for both parties. Try to stay with the facts as you see them rather than inferring the other person’s thoughts or feelings or intentions.  |
| 1. **Prepare the tone and language you will use**
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| Tone of the voice conveys even more that the words you will use so keep a check on this during the meeting and be careful that your tone and your body language don’t undermine your message and intent.  |
| 1. **Remember to listen as well as talk**
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| Don’t let a difficult conversation be a lecture! Conversations are two way. Keep in mind your script but at times you may need to go with the flow and listen and then answer genuinely the question put to you by the employee.  |
| 1. **Objectify the problem. Co –create the solution**
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| Describe the issue objectively and facts not the person.  |