



DIFFICULT CONVERSATION PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Area of Conflict: _____



BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

Step One: Prepare

What are you feeling and thinking that makes you want to have a difficult conversation?

What type of conflict is this?

- A. Unmet Expectations - What expectations are you disappointed about?
- B. Ongoing Relationship Strain - When did you first feel the strain? Why?
- C. Recent Event (Acute) - What is your perspective of the event?

What story do you tell yourself about the other person that may hinder your ability to fully engage in healthy process? Write your assumptions down.

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION cont.

Step Two: Pick the Best Time, Place, and Frame

When is the appropriate time to have the conversation? (Time of day, day of the week, etc)

Where is the appropriate place? (Look for neutral territory where everyone can feel safe.)

Who else should be involved? Who could be a healthy third party (not taking sides)?

What is the appropriate frame on this conversation?

What is the best way to start the conversation? (Plan out your first 1-2 sentences)

What are words/phrases to avoid?

DURING THE CONVERSATION

Step Three: Collect Puzzle Pieces

Build an environment that invites the other person's thoughts, perspectives (and even contrary ideas) to the table. **Bring** reflective listening into the conversation, even if the other party does not understand the power of listening.

Helpful phrases for collecting puzzle pieces:

- "You and I see this issue from different perspectives. I would like to better understand your perspective."
- "What do you see as contributing issues/thoughts/perspectives to our conversation?"
- "Let me try and summarize what I have heard you say."
- "What are the key points you hear me saying?"
- "Is there anything you are thinking that you are not saying?"

What are some thoughts that you may have a hard time bringing to the table? List them below and make a commitment to share them while you also search out the other person's perspective.



*THE SURFACE ISSUE
IS RARELY THE REAL
ISSUE... DIG DEEPER!*



DURING THE CONVERSATION cont.

Step Four: Manage P.I.E.

Manage Perspective

Have you already diagnosed the problem and solution before the conversation has begun—or are you going into the conversation with an open mind, actively seeking other perspectives?

Examine Your Perspective: What are the holes in your view?

What might be the other person's perspective? How can I see from their point of view?

Manage Insecurities

Where do you feel most vulnerable in your life? How does this topic touch those areas?

Are there any broken places in your heart that are being stomped upon in this conversation? What other insecurities may arise in this conversation?

Manage Emotions

What is making me feel (fill in the emotion) right now?

DURING THE CONVERSATION cont.

Step Five: Keep on the Path

Helpful phrases for keeping the conversation on track:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- Is there a better way to do this?
- Do you feel like we are we on track?

Be alert for these potential scenarios:

- Someone starts to attack the other person instead of trying to move forward together
- Make room for emotions; but don't let them dominate.

What do I need to apologize for? What do I need to forgive?



*EXPRESSED EMOTION
DISSIPATES; UNEXPRESSED
EMOTION WILL EXPLODE
INTO A CONVERSATION.*



AFTER THE CONVERSATION // NEXT STEPS

Step Six: Plan Moving Forward

Enter notes for each step below.

What do we agree on?

What do we disagree on?

What is the real problem?

What are the potential solutions?

Which solution is being proposed; accepted; and implemented?

WHO will do WHAT by WHEN to implement?

What will be different as we move forward?

What communication; meetings; actions items need to happen as a follow-up?

How do we make sure there is accountability to what has been agreed upon?
