**Difficult Conversation Planner**

You need to have a high-stakes or difficult conversation with someone. These are hard to have because we often don’t have a measured way to approach the conversation, we care about the outcome, and we care about maintaining the relationship. To best prepare, get clear on your goals and values and think about how to approach the conversation in a way that will maximize your likelihood of getting your message across, being heard, reducing defensiveness, and increasing your effectiveness.

1. **Before the Conversation**

*“If I had an hour to solve the problem, I would spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.” – Albert Einstein*

*“Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation.” – Zig Zigler*

What is your goal? What do you really want *(for yourself, for them, for the organization)*?

Why is this important *(to you, to the team, to business outcomes, etc.)*?

What will be the impact if this conversation goes well?

What will the impact be if it does not go well?

What is uncomfortable about this situation for you?

What is the story you have about this situation?

What are some possibilities about the story this person may have (Positive? Negative? Benign?)

Will this conversation be “safe” for them? *(If not, what can you do to make it safe?)*

What do you know about their communication style?

1. **During the Conversation**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Sounds Like** |
| **1. Make it Safe** | * **Prepare**
* Regulate yourself
* Get permission
* Watch for cues
 | I *want* to talk to you about…Do you have a minute.... |
| **2. State Your Facts** | * Specific
* What was Expected
* **What was Observed**
* Example if needed

*(do not make assumptions about intent or motivation!)* | We agreed…I expected…The expectation is…For example…What I saw… |
| **3. Tell Your Story** | * How you feel
* **Impact** *(on you, them, the team, goals, the organization, etc.)*
* Your contribution
 | I feel…This is important because…I recognize I have contributed… |
| **4. Invite a Response** | * Stop talking
* Hand it over
* Ask a question
* **Decide how to move forward**
 | What’s going on?What is your opinion on this?How do you see it?I want to hear your thoughts.I’d like to hear your point of view.I want to learn your perspective. |

1. **After the Conversation**

How will you follow up?