

Planning a Difficult Conversation

Prepare to be clear and kind at the same time

Most difficult conversations go wrong before they start: they are put off, or entered without being clear what needs to change. Ten minutes with this sheet beforehand makes it far more likely you will be direct without being harsh.

IF SOMEONE NEEDS HELP NOW

If there is an immediate risk to life, call **999**. Samaritans are available free, 24 hours a day, on **116 123**. In England, NHS 111 (option 2) connects to an urgent mental health service.

01

Before the conversation

	MY NOTES
What specifically is the issue? (Facts and examples, not judgements.)	
What impact is it having, on the work, the team or the person?	
What do I need to change? What does good look like?	
What might be going on for them that I do not know about?	
What support could I offer?	
What am I worried about in having this conversation?	

During: acknowledge, clarify, empower, agree

Acknowledge

"I can see this is difficult." Recognise how it may land.

Clarify

"The specific issue I need us to address is..."
Be concrete.

Empower

"What do you think would help? What options can you see?"

Agree

"So the next step is... and I will support it by..."

INSTEAD OF

"I'm sorry to bring this up, and I don't want you to feel criticised, but maybe we could possibly look at..."

TRY

"I value what you bring to the team. There is one thing I need us to work on, and I want to be clear about what needs to change and how I will support you."

After

WHAT WE AGREED	WHO	BY WHEN	WHEN WE WILL REVIEW