

Courageous Conversations Cheat Sheet

You've learned what a courageous conversation is and what it should look like. Now, it's time to apply what you've learned.

By following these steps and using these tips, you can have courageous conversations with your team and help foster an environment of success and coaching in your organization.

PREPARATION: GATHER THE FACTS AND SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

As you prepare, remember the following:

Anticipate how the conversation may go. Think through the various ways the person might respond and have some ideas about how you will handle each possible scenario.

Make the conversation about the issue or behavior – not the person. What can you use to keep the conversation from being accusatory and negative?

Avoid having a laundry list of grievances that you want to address because you won't be able to effectively coach or find a solution to a long list of issues.

Check your emotions. You might be upset or angry, but if you want a solution or to give productive feedback or coaching, shifting those emotions to curiosity and empathy will result in a more productive outcome.

PREPARATION: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
- DO YOU NEED TO SPEAK WITH OTHERS TO GAIN MORE INFORMATION? IF SO, WHO?
- WHAT EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE WITH THIS ISSUE OR PERSON?
- WHAT MIGHT THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERSON YOU ARE GOING TO TALK TO BE?
- WHAT IS YOUR GOAL OF THE CONVERSATION: IS IT TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING? GIVE FEEDBACK? COACH?

HAVING THE CONVERSATION

- Ask Permission.** As you begin, consider asking permission to initiate the conversation, such as:

'Hey. I have a difficult conversation I want to have with you. Would you mind if I shared it with you?'

– or –

'Hey. I have some feedback that I'd like to share with you. Are you open to hearing it now?'

- Ask Questions.** The goal here is to gain their perspective, invite ownership, and help solve the issue. Then, give them the opportunity to respond – and you listen.

Here are some questions to help you get started:

- What happened with _____?
- Can you tell me about your thought process around _____?
- I'm curious about _____. Can you tell me more?
- Can you explain the situation to me?
- Can you walk me through what happened?
- Have you thought about it since?
- Did this affect anyone else? If so, in what way?
- In retrospect, what would you have done differently?

- Identify a solution.** If this scenario is something that can be coached and a solution found, ask:
 - What needs to happen next time?
 - What are some actions we can take that will support that?

- Develop a follow-up plan.**
 - Agree on what moving forward looks like.
 - Identify what follow up you will take as their leader.
 - Identify what they are responsible for as the employee.

- Paint the vision for them.** Paint the vision of what it will look like next time when the new plan is in place and be sure to let them know you are there to support them.