

# TOUGH TALKS



## Approaches to challenging conversations at work

*You can always use . . .*

### BACK-UP



#### 1 **BE CALM**

Postpone until you and the other party can think more calmly and clearly. Take a moment to breathe and collect your thoughts. Have awareness of behaviors that could escalate the situation.



#### 2 **ACKNOWLEDGE PERSPECTIVES**

Try your best to understand and acknowledge the other party's perspective. This doesn't mean you have to agree with it, but consider their perspective from a positive light ("I can see how that was part of this...") to shape the talk.



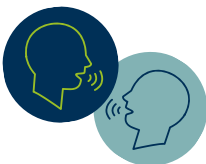
#### 3 **CONSIDER THE MOMENT**

Consider their thoughts (fears, etc.). Acknowledge any feelings they might have about the situation or possible outcomes, or positive aspects of the situation.



#### 4 **KEEP YOUR FOCUS**

Focus mostly on the specifics or objective information (the situation, potential and/or real outcomes) while remaining empathetic. "Avoid "you" statements."



#### 5 **UNDERSTAND THE PERSON**

Get to know the other party and find ways to relate during the conversation. This may take some time, but it can help you acknowledge their thought process and understand their perspective.



#### 6 **PUT DOCUMENTATION IN PLACE**

Keep records to document that the conversation took place (date, time, main points, actions). This will provide you with details for future conversations.

**“Difficult conversations are almost never about getting the facts right.**

**They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values.”**

*-Fierce Conversations*



# TOUGH TALKS



**Avoiding a tough talk only complicates and intensifies the situation. Still, we sometimes shy away from the solution that is right in front of us.**

**Asking questions is important.**

**Asking relevant, appropriate questions is imperative.**

**TOUGH TALKS ARE CHALLENGING ENOUGH, BUT THESE APPROACHES CAN COMPLICATE THE GOAL TO REACH RESOLUTION:**



## THE INQUISITION

The tone of this approach is problematic to the objective. Accusations and innuendos create barriers to building connections.



## THE HOURGLASS

When the value and investment of time is absent, discussions feel disingenuous, rushed, and unproductive. Taking time to talk is just as important as the conversation itself.



## THE CYNICAL CRITIC

This begins and ends in disbelief. Every detail is scrutinized with a blatant refusal to consider other perspectives. The conviction has been leveraged before the dialogue begins.



## THE CRYSTAL BALL

The assumption that all information is common knowledge, with little or nothing shared, creates an expectation of implied agreement. These talks are founded in confusion and end in frustration.



## "THAT GUY"

Knowing everything but nothing, while listening to no one and saying anything. These exchanges exist in isolation through the self-perception of an esteemed expert, with little or no flexibility to learn and adapt. Don't be "that guy" (or girl).

**UTILIZING BACK-UP AND ASKING RELEVANT, APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS CAN TURN TOUGH TALKS INTO CONFIDENT CONVERSATIONS.**

