

Top Tips for Courageous Conversations

The preparation:

- First, think through, without “censorship” what you would really want to say to the individual concerned as though no-one would ever hear your conversation!
- Consider what you really want to achieve – how do you want the new relationship to be? Or if you want the relationship to end – how would you like both parties to look back on the relationship “that was”?
- Try to analyse what lies behind the emotions that you feel – for example you may be angry with someone, but where does this come from? What is the tangible stuff behind the emotion? Is it because they were disrespectful? Did they not think through the impact on you with what they said?
- Consider what their intent might have been behind their behaviour? Often a person’s heart is in the right place, but it all comes out wrong!

A method for the conversation:

- Describe the impact the individual has had on you
- Describe the conflict that this gives you (typically we have seen someone in a certain light and then something changes which causes you to see them differently)
- Identify the questions that it raises for you, about your relationship with them (but don’t presuppose what the answers are!)
- Explain to them how you would like to see your relationship in the future
- Ask them what their first thoughts are on how they would like to see your relationship in the future (if they can – this may be a lot to ask of people at this stage)
- Agree what each of you need to do next to resolve things positively for each other.
- Try to fix a date when you will reconvene to ensure things aren’t left up in the air. Be prepared to take responsibility for this... after all, you started it (finding resolution that is)!

Making it happen:

- If you can, rehearse this conversation with someone you know and trust and who does not have a vested interest in the outcome. If you have a coach, they would be ideally placed.
- If you don’t have someone to talk to at least practice saying things “out loud”, you can often find the best way of getting your message across
- Invite the other person to give you some time, explain that you want to have some uninterrupted time with them to understand some things better.
- Find a place to have the conversation which is a neutral ground and reasonably confidential – so not at your office / home and not in the staff canteen!
- Afterwards follow up with a thank you for taking time out (regardless of how well the meeting went!) and clarify what you agreed to do differently or next

Interested to know more?

Contact Michelle today on 07717 122950 and find out how she could help you!

The Health Warnings:

- This is tough stuff – the more you have these kind of conversations the easier they become but they are never easy
- No matter how well you prepare, people are unpredictable, so expect to have to think on your feet to however the person reacts
- Even if you think you are “sorted” about the issue – typically discussing things again with the person involved evokes emotion. Feeling emotions is a natural human response and if you can, share this sensation with the other person – ignoring it won’t make it go away.
- Remember “naming” your emotions often reduces the tension and encourages the other person to disclose how they are feeling too
- There’s a reason these are called “courageous conversations” – you have to recognise you are taking a risk by challenging the status quo. You hope you will get a good outcome, but of course you may not. As they say – “be careful what you wish for”!

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