Difficult Conversation Guide

CAMS Workplace Resources • Set Kids Up for Success

Practical language to help leaders and employees approach uncomfortable conversations with honesty, respect, and a focus on moving forward.

Before You Talk

- Know the purpose of the conversation.
- Stick to observable facts rather than assumptions.
- Choose an appropriate private setting.
- Think about the outcome you hope to reach.
- Give the other person an opportunity to speak.

Start the Conversation

- “I would like to talk about something I have noticed.”
- “I want us to be able to work through this together.”
- “I know this may be uncomfortable, but I think it is important that we talk about it.”

When Addressing a Concern

- “Here is what I am noticing…”
- “The impact this is having is…”
- “Can you help me understand your perspective?”
- “What do you think would help improve this?”

When You Need Support

- “I would like to talk about something that is affecting my work.”
- “Here is what I am experiencing, and here is what I think might help.”
- “What support or next step would you recommend?”

Keep It Constructive

Focus on the issue, not the person’s character. Listen, identify the shared goal, and end with a clear next step whenever possible.

“Hard conversations can be handled with honesty and care.”

Notes