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# Navigating Difficult Conversations

Deliver Your Message with Poise, Empathy, and  
Resolve



# Webinar Objectives

- Understand the nature of difficult conversations
- Identify the seven stages of handling difficult conversations
- Select a strategy that will improve the results of your next difficult conversation

## Navigating Difficult Conversations

### Process Checklist

### Notes...

Stage 1: Prepare for the Conversation



Stage 2: Initiate the Conversation



Stage 3: Deliver the Message



Stage 4: Listen and Respond



Stage 5: Explore alternatives and solutions, if appropriate



Stage 6: Close the Conversation



Stage 7: Follow up, if appropriate

## Conversations You May Find Difficult

- Delivering bad news
- Giving negative performance feedback; asking employees to make changes
- Saying “no”
- Asking people to do an unpleasant or difficult task
- Acknowledging your mistakes



## Why These Conversations are Difficult

- Fear of causing hurt feelings, not being liked, or not being respected
- Feeling of powerlessness
- Fear of embarrassing yourself or being seen to fall short in responsibilities
- Reluctance to engage in conflict



# To Handle Difficult Conversations

Prepare yourself.

Know what you want to achieve.

Choose the right time and place.

Deliver the message promptly and clearly.

Focus on the facts; tell the truth.

Ask questions; try to see the situation from the other person's perspective.

## To Handle Difficult Conversations (cont.)

- Listen actively, empathize, and acknowledge, respect, and validate the other person's feelings.
- Don't take reactions personally.
- Stay calm.
- Keep an open mind and negotiate (when appropriate).



# Stages of a Difficult Conversation

Stage 1: Prepare for the Conversation



Stage 2: Initiate the Conversation



Stage 3: Deliver the Message



Stage 4: Listen and Respond

Stage 5: Explore alternatives and solutions, if appropriate



Stage 6: Close the Conversation



Stage 7: Follow up, if appropriate



# Coping with Difficult Responses...



## To Cope With Difficult Responses

- **Anger:** Allow the person to “vent”; end the conversation immediately if the person becomes violent.
- **Tears:** Wait while the person gets his or her feelings under control, and acknowledge these feelings; suggest a break if necessary.
- **Frustration:** Acknowledge and empathize with their feelings; show you want to help.

## To Cope with Difficult Responses (cont.)

- ***Resistance***: Empathize, focus on facts, and offer evidence.
- ***Passivity***: Ask questions to draw out their thoughts.



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