

Preparing For A

Difficult Conversation

Difficult conversations at work are inevitable but preparation can make those tough talks a little easier. You may not be able to fully prepare for ad-hoc conversations, however, here is a checklist covering the ideal preparation needed for having difficult conversations:

Schedule the conversation for sooner rather than later, choosing an appropriate location and time - don't procrastinate or try to postpone the inevitable

Determine the purpose of the conversation

Know your ideal outcome, but be prepared to be flexible by reaching a compromise

Practice articulating the problem in hand

Create a rough plan for the conversation, what questions do you need answered?

Put yourself in their shoes and try to pre-empt challenges or queries

Reflect on your current knowledge and fill any gaps

Are you/have you already made assumptions that you need to be mindful of?

Check relevant policies and procedures

Make sure you are in the right headspace

Collect real, factual evidence and examples

Consider taking a witness if it is a more formal meeting

Brainstorm potential solutions

Consider any precedents you might be setting by taking a specific course of action - could this have a wider business impact?

Identify what emotions are connected to this conversation or could be triggered in you

Be prepared to document the conversation, in an objective factual way, avoiding personal opinions as these are subjective

Adopt a positive, open attitude and mindset and be receptive to any feedback