

# Difficult Conversation Checklist

Use this checklist from the ResourcefulManager Framework For Holding Difficult Conversations as a refresher before initiating a difficult conversation.



## Before the talk

- Know what you want to get out of the talk and what the end result needs to be.
- Your mindset going into the talk should be that nothing will distract you from reaching that result.
- Think positive thoughts about the person you will talk to and that a positive outcome is possible.
- Resolve to be absolutely, brutally honest during the conversation.
- Respect the individual, even when he or she has done something wrong.
- Your goal is not to assess blame, but to achieve understanding and arrive at a solution.
- Notify the person in advance that you need to meet with him or her at a specific time.
- Plan to meet in a neutral setting, such as a conference room.

## During the talk

- Allow physical space between you and the person – for both comfort and safety reasons.
- No chit-chat. Lead with a strong, effective opening stating up front why you have called the meeting and what this is going to be about.
- Lay out the facts in a straightforward manner.
- Test for agreement. Find out what things the person agrees with.
- Repeat the facts, including your (or management's) interpretation.
- Outline why this behavior is not acceptable. Explain the consequences.
- Let employees tell their side of the story without interrupting.
- Watch for and disarm any delaying or thwarting ploys, such as crying, shouting, etc.
- Explore solutions together. Joint collaboration is best when possible.
- Once you have a solution, end the conversation quickly on a positive note.

## After the talk

- Write up your notes and the outcome of the meeting.
- Follow up periodically to make sure the agreement is carried out.