

# Managing Difficult Conversations

Presentation to CARLI  
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# Workshop Agenda

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Welcome

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Introductions

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Workshop Objectives and Format

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Role Play Scenario Take 1

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Key Success Factors

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Role Play Scenario Take 2

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Questions and Discussion

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Closing

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Resources

## Workshop Objectives

What makes a conversation difficult?

What are key success factors for difficult conversations?

What are some strategies to help you prepare?

Disclaimers

# Workshop Format

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Role play scenarios for analysis

Participant input/responses via chat

Discussion and Questions

Think of a difficult conversation you need to have.

What is it about?

Reply in Zoom chat – 60 seconds

# Difficult Conversations – 5 Workplace Topics

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Giving Performance Feedback

Disagreeing with the Boss

Dealing with a Teammate's Behavior

Addressing an issue of ethics

*@PeacefulMindPeacefulLife*

When we avoid difficult  
conversations, we trade  
short-term discomfort for  
long-term dysfunction.

-PETER BROMBERG



# Role Play Scenario - Introduction

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Joellen is the manager who joined the group last year. Garry is her employee. Garry wanted the manager job that Joellen is in.

All staff in the office are required to provide updates to the office project list on a weekly basis. Updates should take no more than 5-10 minutes per week. For the last year, Garry has never been on time with his updates and has to be reminded to do them.

Joellen feels frustrated and disrespected. Garry feels micro-managed and resentful. Joellen decides she has let this linger for too long and it is time to address it.



What did you notice in that scenario?

Reply in Zoom chat – 60 seconds

# Difficult Conversations – Key Success Factors

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How are you feeling?



Acknowledge why this feels scary or hard

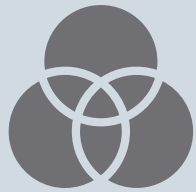
Consider how the other person will feel

Key Success  
Factors –

Emotional  
Readiness

# Key Success Factors – Clarify Your Purpose

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What is your desired  
outcome?



Are you clear on the  
facts?



Does the other person  
know there is a problem?

# Key Success Factors – Plan the Structure

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How will you  
meet? In-  
person? Virtual?

When will you  
meet?

What happens  
afterwards?

# Key Success Factors – Prepare for the Meeting (1)

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Have an outline of key points



Consider stating your desired  
outcome

# Key Success Factors – Prepare for the Meeting (2)

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How will the other person respond?



How do you know? (Be wary of assumptions)



How will you react?

# Key Success Factors – Prepare Yourself (1)

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DEVELOP YOUR POSITIVE  
INTENTION FOR THE  
CONVERSATION



CONSIDER YOUR EMOTIONS  
REGARDING THIS PERSON



CONSIDER YOUR COMFORT  
REGARDING THIS ISSUE



# Key Success Factors – Prepare Yourself (2)

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Make an outline and practice

Consider asking a colleague to role play  
with you

# Role Play Scenario - Introduction

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Joellen feels frustrated and disrespected. Garry feels micro-managed and resentful. Joellen decides she has let this linger for too long and it is time to address it.

What did you notice in that scenario?

Reply in Zoom chat – 60 seconds


# Questions and Discussion

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What is one strategy you will use for your next difficult conversation?

Reply in Zoom chat – 60 seconds



A photograph of the Manhattan Bridge, showing the intricate steel suspension structure and the wooden walkway. The bridge spans across a body of water, with the New York City skyline visible in the background under a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent white text box is centered over the middle of the image.

Having a productive and satisfying business conversation is an art.  
To some extent it can be pre-planned.  
To some extent it is a product of curiosity,  
good listening, and improvisation.

# Resources

*Book:* Fierce Conversations – Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time! By Susan Scott

*Article:* Words and Phrases to Avoid in a Difficult Conversation

<https://hbr.org/2021/06/words-and-phrases-to-avoid-in-a-difficult-conversation>

*Tool:* Difficult Conversation Worksheet

<https://www.matc.edu/who-we-are/offices/ombuds/difficult-conversation-worksheet.pdf>

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