



DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: A GUIDE FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED LEADERS

RESOURCE BOOKLET

MIKHAEL BORNSTEIN, MA

BOOKS AND PODCASTS

PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE LOTS OF GREAT RESOURCES OUT THERE. HERE ARE A FEW TO GET YOU STARTED.

Five Books:

- *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler
- *Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity* by Kim Scott
- *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen
- *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen
- *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* by Patrick Lencioni

Five Podcasts:

- *Think Fast, Talk Smart: Communication Techniques* hosted by Matt Abrahams
- *How Can I Say This...* Hosted by Blythe Musteric and Marc Musteric
- *Communicate to Motivate* Hosted by Jim Van Allan
- *Communicast* Hosted by Scott D'Amico
- *Toastcaster Communication Leadership Learning Lab* Hosted by Greg Gazin

REVIEW

Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee growth• We care about the employee• We care about the team
Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove filters• Get curious• Be supportive
Setting the stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where• When• How
Having the conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set expectations• “When ... I ...”• Make it safe• Deescalate• Priming• Move to action
Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document• Check-in• Praise

SEVEN GOOD WAYS TO START THE CONVERSATION

- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.
- I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," be sure to follow up.
- I think we have different perceptions about _____. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.
- I'd like to talk about _____. I think we may have different ideas about how to _____.
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

R = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E = use EMPATHETIC listening.

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

T = TRUST ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong.

6 TOOLS TO FACILITATE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

- **Make it Safe to Talk**
 - Embrace a mutual purpose.
 - Offer mutual respect.
- **Listen**
 - Seek first to understand and then to be understood
 - Ask open-ended questions. “Tell me more...” “Help me understand...”
- **Adopt the “Yes, And...” Stance**
 - Validate that both your view of the situation, and that of another person, have value and you do not have to choose which one is right.
- **Learn to Recognize your Stories to Separate Impact and Intent**
 - We tell ourselves stories when we add meaning to another’s behavior without checking if our conclusions are right.
 - To prevent yourself from leaping to assumptions about another’s intent, ask questions.
- **Use “I” Messages**
 - When ... I ... Can ...
- **Focus on Contribution, NOT Blame**
 - Contribution asks, “How did we each contribute to this problem or conflict that we are experiencing?”

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- A successful outcome will depend on two things: how you are and what you say. How you are (centered, supportive, curious, problem-solving) will greatly influence what you say.
- Acknowledge emotional energy—yours and your partner's—and direct it toward a useful purpose.
- Know and return to your purpose at difficult moments.
- Don't take verbal attacks personally. Help your partner come back to center.
- Don't assume your partner can see things from your point of view.
- Practice the conversation with a friend before holding the real one.
- Mentally practice the conversation. See various possibilities and visualize yourself handling them with ease. Envision the outcome you are hoping for.

7 MORE TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Have a goal in mind.
- Use a non-blaming communication style.
 - “When ... I ... Can ...
- Recognize that complex, interpersonal problems have complex, interpersonal causes.
- Accept criticism if it's on-topic.
- Phrase requests toward the positive.
- Don't feel the need for total victory.
- Don't forget to listen.

MIKHAEL BORNSTEIN, MA

Having worked in the arts, health, social service, and education sectors, Mikhael Bornstein has more than twenty years of experience as a nonprofit leader. Mikhael is an AFP Master Trainer and a frequent speaker at conferences across North America. He teaches at George Brown College and Toronto Metropolitan University. Mikhael has a Master in Arts in Leadership Studies from Royal Roads University.

MIKHAEL@THEPHILANTROPICLEADER.COM

[WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/MIKHAELBORNSTEIN/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikhaelbornstein/)

[WWW.THEPHILANTROPICLEADER.COM/NEWSLETTER](https://www.thephilanthropicleader.com/newsletter)