

PREPARING FOR AN AWKWARD CONVERSATION WORKSHEET

Sometimes, we can be tempted to ignore a situation or avoid a conversation because the thought of addressing it is uncomfortable. Yet, it can often be the case that the issue only becomes worse the longer that it remains unaddressed. This worksheet is designed to help you prepare to address an uncomfortable situation.

1. What is it that you would like to accomplish in addressing the situation?

Please do not focus on the actions of others (i.e. I want my neighbour to stop being so noisy) and instead on what a positive outcome means for you (i.e. I would like to sleep soundly). Keep what is important to you in mind as you raise your concern to stay focused.

2. What makes you hesitant to bring up your concern with those involved in it?

It can be just as tempting to ignore what makes the situation uncomfortable as it can be to avoid taking action to address it. Honour what makes the situation difficult for you. Share this if/when appropriate.

3. What about the situation may be difficult for others involved in it?

Rather than embracing an “if I was you” approach, simply try to relate to what may make the situation hard for others. While you may not fully know what it is like for others, trying to understand their perspective and showing empathy can often go a long way toward establishing shared understanding.

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4. How can you approach the situation in a way that will make it easier for others involved to help address it?

Often, the way that we present a problem impacts how others respond to it (i.e. telling someone that they have no regard for others and lousy taste in music may not be the best way to have them turn down their stereo). Apply what you know about the others involved, appreciate what you do not know and think about how you may best position yourself to accomplish your goal in the course of addressing the situation.

5. What is the worst reaction that you can anticipate and how will you respond to it?

While you cannot control the actions of others, you can control how you react. Reflecting in advance on your “buttons” and how you will conduct yourself if they are pushed can help ensure that even in a worst case scenario, you put yourself in a better position having raised the issue.

6. What one little thing can be done to slightly improve the situation?

Think about a small step that will not resolve the problem entirely but instead make it a little bit better.

It can help to practice having an awkward conversation with a friend or in front of a mirror. Trying out different approaches in terms of how you present the problem can help you become more comfortable having the uncomfortable conversation as well as ensure that you select the right choice of words.

Reward yourself after the discussion for overcoming your hesitation and trying to improve the situation!