

## Tip sheet

# Having difficult conversations

Difficult conversations can be daunting, but they're still an essential aspect of our personal and professional growth. Whether it's addressing a sensitive issue with a loved one or tackling a thorny topic at work, the ability to engage in healthy, constructive dialogues is a valuable skill.



### Here are some tips for having difficult conversations

#### **Choose the right time and place**

Timing matters. Find a private, neutral space where both parties can speak freely without interruptions or having to rush.

#### **Stay calm and collected**

Emotions can run high during difficult conversations. Practise self-regulation by taking deep breaths and staying calm. Avoid raising your voice or becoming defensive.

#### **Active listening**

Give the other person your full attention. Listen actively without interrupting, and use physical cues like nodding to show that you're engaged.

#### **Empathise**

Try to understand the other person's perspective. Empathy can help create common ground. Acknowledge their feelings, even if you disagree with them.

#### **Use 'I' statements**

Express your thoughts and feelings using 'I' statements. For example, say, 'I feel overwhelmed when...' instead of, 'You always make me feel overwhelmed.' This helps your approach sound less like blame and more personal.

#### **Stick to the facts**

Base your conversation on concrete examples and facts rather than generalisations or assumptions. This makes your points clearer and more convincing.

#### **Summarise and seek agreement**

Periodically summarise what's been discussed to make sure you're on the same page. Ask the other person for their perspective and potential solutions.

#### **Follow-up**

After the conversation, follow up and check that any agreed-upon actions are being taken. Doing this will show your commitment to resolving the issue.

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