

# The Art of Being Honest



## BASIC GUIDELINES FOR HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

1. Set aside time and ask permission to have the conversation: no ambushing. You could say, for example: “There’s something on my mind and I think it will take a few minutes to discuss. Can we do that now or at some time that works for you, so we have each other’s full attention?”
2. State your intention/feelings/fear. For example: “I sure hate to bring this up, it’s so awkward and I really do not want to create any drama, but I also really want to feel like we can have an open and honest relationship.”
3. Frame the conversation gracefully. You are trying to put the person at ease so they are prepared to listen. For example: “I know there are two sides to everything. I want to share with you how I have been reacting/feeling and get YOUR perspective. I’m sorry I have been holding this in. I want to be able to tell you anything and not harbor anything between us.”

If you can’t frame the conversation in a positive way, that probably means you still want to “stick it to” the other person. Go back to your coach or a trusted advisor for help/practice until you are clear-headed enough to be graceful.

4. State your issue. For example: “Every time XYZ happens/Last time XYZ happened, it really got my goat. In my head I make up that it means- I am on my own/you don’t care about my feelings/you want credit for something you don’t deserve it for.” Here you can also take responsibility for any part you can see you have in the dynamic or tension.
5. Ask them (one or all of these): How is it for you? What’s your perspective? Do you know what I am talking about?



6. Listen fully, just as you'd want them to listen to you. Then say back what you heard to really demonstrate having listened and to make sure you got what they said and even got the emotional impact they are experiencing or experienced. The point is to "get" their version. You don't have to agree, you have to understand! Apologize for your part in their negative experience. Ask if they want to understand your perspective. If they want to know and understand why you did what you did, you can explain, but watch your excuses here.
7. Note any true discrepancies or disagreements and offer possible negotiations or resolutions. Ideally, end with promises to each other for how to deal next time and avoid the problem or the negative trait havoc. For example: "Next time I start to judge you for XYZ, I promise I will tell you before I go to sleep that night." or "I need you to ask me how I am and what I need at least once each time we see each other, etc."

NOTES: Remember you have no idea what they will say or how it will go. This isn't about being perfect, being right, winning or avoiding a fight. It's about being mature and honest, and having a real relationship. If it goes badly, if anger or defensiveness enters the picture for you or them, call a timeout. It's okay to fail at this. It's okay to need more than one round to get it right. It's okay to be bad at this and need to "get good" at it. It's okay to be good at it with some people and be bad at it with others. If it's not going well, call it out: "This isn't going well. We're too sensitive to do this really fairly and well, so let's schedule another time later and try again fresh." If it's way too important or too intense, it's a viable option to get a mediator you trust (preferably someone who understands the steps above).