



PREPARING FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

We can all be in situations sometimes where we need to communicate information to an individual or group that makes us feel uncomfortable. Sometimes we avoid these conversations altogether.

What is a challenging conversation?

Challenging conversations are those that cause feelings of elevated emotional intensity for either party involved. They can be caused by conflicts that one or both parties don't want to discuss, situations where you don't know what to say, differing opinions or perspectives, uncertainty surrounding a circumstance, or negative information that needs to be communicated

How can we make challenging conversations productive?

Prepare for the conversation:

When having a challenging conversation with someone, you want to be prepared and confident, so your communication is clear, and the conversation has some direction. You want to know the purpose of the conversation you are having and what you are going to say during that conversation; make sure you are communicating respectfully and avoid making assumptions before hearing the other parties' perspectives.

Active listening:

Active listening ensures you are staying present

and assertive within the conversation and both parties have the chance to be heard. If you just focus on what you have to say and don't listen to what the other party has to say, then nothing within the conversation will progress or be meaningful. Active listening can support both parties to find common ground and ultimately reach a solution.

Manage emotions:

Within the conversation, managing your feelings and keeping the conversation logical instead of reacting with emotions is essential. Challenging conversations cause feelings to heighten, so it's essential to take breaks within the conversation as you need, as sometimes, we need to reset so we don't say anything regretful.

Reflect on the conversation:

As emotions are heightened after a challenging conversation, it is important to reflect on the conversation by journaling any emotions felt within the conversation. It is also important to reflect on the conversation to summarise the topics covered and evaluate the outcome.

Follow-up:

It is important to follow up with the other party or parties after a difficult conversation to ensure everyone is feeling okay and to discuss any thoughts that arise after reflecting. If solutions were brought up during the conversation, it's beneficial to check in to see if the agreed-upon solutions are being upheld.



FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD

A commonly used assertive communication tool to assist with this is the **DEAR MAN** technique:

DEAR MAN TECHNIQUE:

D

DESCRIBE

the facts of the situation without judgement

E

EXPRESS

use "I" statements when expressing your emotions

A

ASSERT

state what you want, need, or expect with specific instructions or examples

R

REINFORCE

reward the other person's effective communication reinforcing when they respond well and benefit to them for listening to your request

M

MINDFULNESS

remain mindful of your goal and points for the conversation

A

**APPEAR
CONFIDENT**

engage your communication skills

N

NEGOTIATE

what and how are you willing to accept or compromise on the issue?

