



## 7 Ways to Make Difficult Conversations Easier

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When difficult conversations are done well they deepen bonds of trust and build strong relationships that create loyal lifetime clients. Try out these seven tips to get better at holding these challenging conversations so that you are the MOST trusted advisor ... and make a bigger difference in your clients' lives.

1. **Prepare and Start with Heart.** What's the most desirable outcome you can imagine? What do you want to "Have" at the end of the conversation?" Now, get clear on how you want to "Be" and what you want to "Do" during the conversation that aligns with what you want for your client, your relationship and the business. ***80% of the outcome is the result of your preparation.***
2. **Avoid Being Judgmental.** Focus on facts and observed behaviors rather than relying on your own opinions. Hold your client in the best light. When our motives are of service, we promote learning, find truth, produce results, and strengthen the client relationship.
3. **Listen with Empathy.** Give your client your undivided attention. Put yourself in your client's shoes and see the issues and concerns from their perspective. What might your client be feeling about the situation? Listen for the meaning and for the feelings behind their words. Validate their feelings, even if you don't agree.
4. **Use Engaging Body Language.** Maintain good eye contact. Use posture & body language that creates a feeling of involvement on your part, e.g., lean in slightly when the other person speaks.
5. **Paraphrase for Active Listening.** Summarize in your own words to check for understanding. Then ask, "Do I have that right?" or "Is there anything I'm missing?" This is active listening which makes the client feel heard and validates understanding.
6. **Be Comfortable with Silence.** There will be moments in the conversation where silence occurs. Wait! Don't rush to fill it with words. Pauses in the conversation allows your client to digest, interpret and offer a solution.
7. **Ask Discovery Questions to Learn.** Stay curious and seek first to understand. Ask "open- ended" questions (e.g., What, How, When, Tell me more...). Practice less "telling" and more "asking." Questions deepen understanding, draw out possibilities and empower your client to find solutions. See sample discovery questions on page 2.



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unifying teams to  
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# Sample Discovery Questions

## Inquiry

1. What do you want to accomplish?
2. What is most important to you?
3. How would that help you?
4. If you got that, what would that mean for you?
5. What else can you tell me?
6. What leads you to think what you think?
7. What part of what I am asking for works/what would make it better for you?
8. What do you need to get so that you can leave today feeling good about the agreement?
9. It sounds as if what you are really most interested in is \_\_\_\_? Is that right?
10. Some people in your situation might be concerned about \_\_\_\_\_. What are your concerns?
11. What do you think are your underlying interests in this situation?
12. How do you see it?
13. Can you help me to better understand?
14. What role would you like for me to play?

## Problem Solving

1. What would be the ideal situation for you?
2. What would it take to make this work?
3. Which parts of the proposal are most important for you?
4. What would happen if we took this portion of your proposal and this portion of my proposal and put them together like this?
5. If you were in my position, what would you suggest?
6. If I were willing/ to do \_\_\_\_ for you, would you be willing/able to do \_\_\_\_ for me?

## Commitment

1. What do you suggest we do?
2. To clarify, and I'm agreeing to do \_\_\_\_, you're agreeing to do \_\_\_\_; Have I got that right?
3. What could get in the way of following through on your commitment?



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