

Negotiating for Change

7 Steps to Greater Cooperation and Collaboration

Use these steps to conduct important but sometimes difficult conversations with those you work, live and socialize with when change is desired and needed. A purposeful conversation is about arriving at a shared understanding, a clear path forward and agreement to the change, honouring everyone's needs and perspective in the process.

Keep in mind that everyone is doing their best given their current level of understanding at the time. If they knew differently, they would have done differently. People make judgments and assumptions all the time, often based on their own insecurities, misgivings and fears.

Most importantly, the issue is never personal. Demonstrating compassion and understanding will go a long way in resolving the issue with grace and ease.

1. Connect with the Other Person

Take some time to have a chat with the person about how they are doing, how their day is going. This helps to put both of you at ease.

If you feel slightly nervous, tell the person you are feeling nervous, that having conversations like this is difficult for you and you will do your best to be open to their perspective. Be transparent, honest and vulnerable.

2. Identify the Issue or Problem

This takes some careful consideration. It is important to clearly state a problematic result (this happened) or a specific behaviour (you did or did not do something). Be as precise as possible. Identifying a behaviour is even more critical as the conversation is not about the quality of character of the person you are addressing. The problem or behaviour is not personal to you so don't take it personal.

Example: The report was due at 4:00 PM and you did not submit your file until 5:30 PM that day.

Not: I can't believe you submitted your file late.

3. State Why the Result or Behaviour is a Problem

Again, this is not about making the other person wrong or bad or taking the issue personally.

"When you were late with your report, the company missed an important deadline with our client. We take pride in delivering on time and endeavor to keep our promise". (This speaks to the company's values and priorities).

4. Ask for the Other Person's Perspective

"Help me understand why you were not able to get your report in on time".

or

"What kept you from letting me know ahead of time you were running into problems and could not deliver it on time?"

Avoid asking "why questions". This will likely to put the person on the defensive and struggle to explain themselves rather than explore the problem.

5. Give the Person Time to Respond and Explore Solutions Going Forward

This is not about excuses, this is about identifying a misunderstanding, unforeseen issue or roadblock that could be corrected so that the situation does not happen again.

This is the time to listen to the other's perspective, to understand what happened and what they need in the future to produce a better outcome – time, resources, better instructions, clearer priorities.

6. State What Is Needed Going Forward

Be specific with what behaviours are required from the individual...

"Next time we have a deadline, either you deliver on time or let me know that you need help in time to get you the help you need."

7. Confirm Agreement

"Would you be willing to do that?" (Wait for Yes or No answer)

or

"Are you able to do that?"

"What would help you to do or accomplish that?"

"So we are in agreement then, next time you will....."

"Thank you".

Reward and Acknowledgment

When you observe the change, let the person know you recognize they have acted in accordance with your mutual agreement and that you appreciate them for following through.

"Thank you".

Our chief human needs are to feel respected, valued and appreciated, and to know that we belong.