

Employee fact sheet:

Having constructive conversations at work



Difficult conversations at work can feel uncomfortable. It is natural to feel nervous about how the other person may respond or whether the conversation could make things worse.

Constructive conversations do not need to be perfect. Preparing well, staying calm and communicating clearly can help you raise concerns respectfully and increase the chance of a useful outcome.

Common barriers to constructive conversations

Even when you know a conversation is needed, it can be hard to know how to begin or what to expect. Understanding what can make these conversations feel difficult can help you prepare more thoughtfully and respond with greater confidence.

Difficult conversations can feel harder when:

- emotions are running high
- you are worried about upsetting someone
- there is a power difference
- the issue has been building for a long time
- you are unsure what to say
- the other person reacts defensively
- you are concerned about being misunderstood
- you have had a negative experience in the past

Not every conversation will go exactly as planned. The goal is to communicate respectfully, stay focused on the issue and seek support if you need help preparing or responding.



Reaching out early makes a real difference. Contact [PeopleSense](#) to book a confidential appointment with a qualified psychologist.

AU: 1300 307 912

NZ: 0800 425 526

Strategies that may help

1. Prepare before the conversation

Think about what you want to say, what outcome you are hoping for and the key points you need to cover.

2. Choose the right time and place

Where possible, have the conversation privately and at a time when both people can focus.

3. Be clear and specific

Use simple, direct language. Focus on the issue, the impact and the outcome.

4. Use "I" statements

Explain your experience using I statements to demonstrate how the situation is specifically affecting you. For example, "I felt unsure about the deadline" or "I'm finding the workload difficult to manage."

5. Listen

Give the other person space to respond. Try to understand their perspective, even if you do not agree.

6. Stay calm and respectful

Pause if emotions rise. Keeping your tone steady can help the conversation stay constructive.

7. Seek support early

If you're unsure how to handle a conversation or it's impacting your wellbeing, you can access confidential support and guidance for constructive discussions through [PeopleSense by Altius](#), your EAP.