

NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Facilitators Guide: Key Conversations – Managing Difficult Conversations

What is a key conversation?

A key conversation is a short, structured conversation based around a simple scenario. Key conversations can be used as thought starters to raise awareness of small groups of workers during routine meetings or during planned training.

Who is this Facilitators Guide for?

This resource was developed to assist team leaders, managers or any person who facilitates group discussions.

Managing Difficult Conversations

How to facilitate these key conversations

The goal of this resource is to assist your workers to practice and build their skills in managing the conversations they need to have in their role. It aims to do this by increasing their awareness of themselves and others and facilitating discussion around some of the challenges and expected responses.

This tool has facilitator instructions, answer keys, tips on how to use the Power Point slides and the Team Workbook.

The facilitator's focus will be on creating opportunities for workers to explore and ask questions. Facilitators should ideally have the skills to:

- Facilitate open discussions
- Coach people to come up with solutions and answers

In addition to this Facilitators Guide, you will also need:

- The PowerPoint Slides
- The Team Workbook

Preparation

In preparation for facilitating this key conversation, read through all the materials.

Outline:

This training is made up of five separate parts:

Title	Topic	Activity	Slides
Introduction	Setting the scene and introducing empathy.	Group discussion on slide notes and video on slide 3	1-3
Conflict	Understanding conflict and how it impacts us	Group activity 1 on Team Workbook page 2	4
Communication Styles	Aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive and assertive communication	Whole group discussion on slide notes and Group activity 2 on Team Workbook page 3	5-6

Planning for difficult conversations	What preparation we can do to help	Group Activity 3 on Team Workbook page 4	7
Having Difficult Conversations	Self-regulation, shared goals, curiosity and clear communication	Group Activity 4 on Team Workbook page 7	8-10

General Tips

- Get familiar with all the resources before your presentation, so you can adapt them to your presentation style and the training needs of your organisation.
- Take notes if there is anything you need to follow up on after the session.
- Test the video on Power Point slide 3 before your presentation.
- Depending on the size of the group, ask people to separate into groups of three to four as necessary for activities.

Tips for online presentations

- Ensure you are comfortable with the video conference program you will be using. This includes sharing your screen, sharing video and making sure that audio works.
- Share workbook resource with participants ahead of time.
- If you run breakout rooms, consider if it would be helpful for yourself to visit the rooms to facilitate the discussion or wait until participants in breakout rooms come back to share their key points of discussion.

Power Point slides

Instruction for facilitators

The Power Point slides have a suggested script in the notes section that can be used and adapted by the facilitator. Use the Power Point presentation to guide your presentation and to introduce the activities of the Team Workbook.

Team Workbook

Instruction for facilitators

Refer to the Team Workbook for the instructions for each activity.

Group Activity 1 – How do we feel about conflict

Introduce the activity

Refer the group to page 2 of their workbook and introduce the activity. Ask the participants to read through the scenario, think about how this might make them think and feel, and consider what impact this might have on the interaction with their manager.

Allocate the attendees into different groups (suggested size 3-4 people per group).

Set a time limit for the activity (suggested timeframe 5 minutes).

At the end of this time, bring the groups back together and ask people to share some of their responses.

Facilitator's Answer Key

This facilitator answer key provides information around the expected responses to the questions. It provides space for you, as the facilitator, to note any areas where there may be gaps in learning or that require follow up in your training, plans, policies, or procedures.

1. What thoughts do you have?

Some expected responses

- "They think I am not good at my job"
- "They weren't there, how could they know?"
- "They're being unreasonable."
- "If only they'd listen to me."
- "I think I might be in trouble."
- "I'm the professional here."
- "Maybe I am wrong."

2. How would that feel?

Some expected responses

- Undermined
- Doubted/insecure
- Impostor syndrome
- Disrespected
- Unsupported

3. How might these feelings impact the interaction with the manager?

Some expected responses

- Get defensive
- Appease
- Shut down, not respond
- Emotions take over, get upset

Team Workbook

Group Activity 2 – Communication Styles

Introduce the activity

Instructions “In your groups, read through each of the scenarios or statements, think about what type of communication you think it is, and rephrase the statement to communicate the same message in an assertive way”.

Set a time limit for the activity – suggested timeframe 10 minutes.

At the end of this time, bring the groups back together and ask people to share some of their responses.

Facilitator’s Answer Key

This facilitator answer key provides information around the expected responses. It provides space for you as the facilitator, to note any areas where there may be gaps in learning or that require follow up in your training, plans, policies, or procedures.

Statement	Type of communication Rephrased in an assertive way
<p>" If you don't follow my instructions exactly, you'll be reported to the supervisor and could lose your job."</p> <p>What communication style is this? How could you rephrase this?</p>	<p>Type of communication: Aggressive</p> <p>Rephrase: "I could be wrong, but I don't think that's the right way to do that. Can we refer to their care plan so we can be sure?"</p>
<p>"You have done so well considering your level of experience, I am not surprised this huge error occurred, I'm just surprised things didn't go wrong sooner".</p> <p>What communication style is this? How could you rephrase this?</p>	<p>Type of communication: Passive aggressive</p> <p>Rephrase: "Mistakes can happen, we have all experienced that, how are you, is there anything I can do to help?"</p>
<p>"I know we are all busy, but is it that difficult to get an incident report submitted? Everyone else can do it, why can't you?"</p> <p>What communication style is this? How could you rephrase this?</p>	<p>Type of communication: Aggressive</p> <p>Rephrase: "It's really important for everyone's safety that we get incident reports as</p>

	<p>soon as possible. What changes can we make to ensure this is happening and that people are safe?”</p>
<p>“My shift was supposed to finish 30 minutes ago, but that’s ok I can finish that job for you”.</p> <p>What communication style is this? How could you rephrase this?</p>	<p>Type of communication:</p> <p>Passive</p> <p>Rephrase:</p> <p>“My shift has finished and I’m going home. If you don’t get time to do it, I’d be happy to finish that when I come back tomorrow.”</p>



Team Workbook:

Group Activity 3 – Difficult Conversations

Introduce the activity

Instructions: “Read through the scenario on page 4 and make a plan for this conversation. Don’t worry if you don’t have all the information you need, just fill in what you can.”

Set a time limit for the activity – suggested timeframe 10 minutes.

At the end of this time bring the groups back together and go through each section, ask people to share some of their responses.



This planning activity is adapted from [Difficult conversations - United Nations](#). It is designed to assist people to think through a conversation before they have it.

Team workbook:

Group Activity 4 – Role Play Scenarios

Preparation

- Divide the group into pairs. If there's an odd number, a group of three can work, with one person acting as an observer.
- Give each pair a roleplay scenario, instructing them to only read the information for the role they will be playing.
- Find role play scenarios in pages 9-12.

Introduce the activity

Read through the instructions on page 7 of the Team Workbook

Set a time limit for the activity – suggested timeframe 20 minutes.

At the end of this time bring the groups back together and ask people to share some of their responses.

Please note: This resource was developed in January 2024 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.